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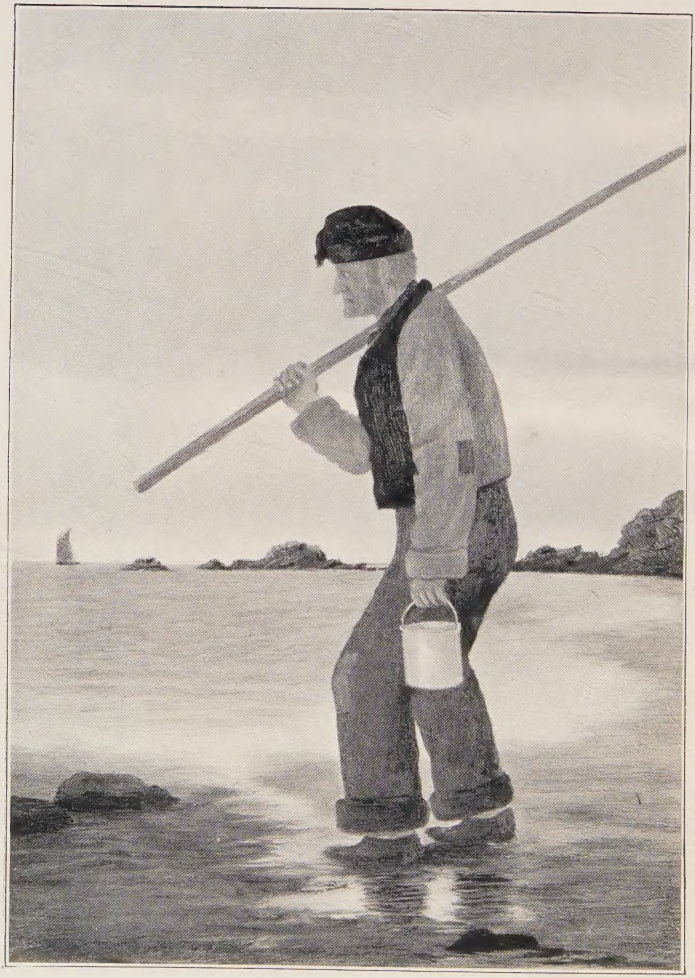

From Sketch in Oil by W. L. Low.

AULD SANDY MILNE.

VIGNETTES

FROM A

PARSON'S ALBUM.

BY

WILLIAM LESLIE LOW, D.D.,

Rector of St. Columba's, Largs, and Canon of Cumbrae; previously Incumbent of Christ Church, Kincardine O'Neil, and of St. James's, Cruden.

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PREFACE.

THESE sketches were contributed under the same title to a small magazine called *The Scottish Standard Bearer* during the years 1891-1902. Naturally the readers of that magazine had to be kept in view. Naturally also a large proportion of the human subjects vignetted in the Parson's Album belonged to his own communion and his own flock. But by no means all. The volume contained cherished pictures of lovable and instructive characters in other communions, whom the author thought it would do his readers good to know. Such, for example, is that of Auld Widow Maitland, who belonged to a communion so different from his own as that which Robertson of Craigdam used to call "The Guid Auld Seceders." The Parson thinks it will do any reader good to look on her portrait, albeit not a full-length, but only a vignette.

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A COUNTRY PARSON.

"Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife,
His sober wishes never learnt to stray;
Along the cool sequestered vale of life
He kept the noiseless tenor of his way."

How pleasant is his memory! It comes back, and will come back, over the intervening years, like the fragrance of a distant field. He was my neighbour for half a score of years; our spheres of duty were largely similar; and, albeit I was but a child in arms when he was ordained, and nine miles of rough and hilly road lay between his "modest mansion" and mine, we yet "took sweet counsel together, and walked in the House of God as friends." The recognition afar off of his gig, and the dark figure of his raw-looking, long-legged, sprawling, loosely-constructed Rosinante, was the promise (always fulfilled) of a day of thorough enjoyment. His warm-hearted friendliness, his brotherliness, his ever-sparkling humour, his shrewd and sensible views—which were those of a man thoroughly in touch with the

Church, and with his own surroundings—made his companionship delightful. And to go over and pay him a visit was an equally great delight.

On arriving, my pony was consigned for the rest of the day to the loving care of "Thomas," who felt far more kindly towards her than towards his own special charge, whom he used to handle timidly with the tips of his fingers, endeavouring all the while to preserve his own self-respect, by pretending to overawe the harmless brute with loud and objurgatory words.

If I did not find my friend at the Parsonage, I could always find information where to look for him. One of his favourite haunts was the burnside, where he pursued his favourite recreation of angling. He would have said with old Isaak Walton, "we may say of angling as Dr Boteler said of strawberries, 'Doubtless God could have made a better berry, but doubtless God never did'; and so if I might be judge, 'God never did make a more calm, quiet, innocent recreation than angling.'" And old Isaak would have regarded him as full justification for having said, "he found that the hearts of such men, by nature were fitted for contemplation and quietness; men of mild, and sweet, and peaceable spirits, as indeed most anglers are."

As I think of one occasion when I went to look for him, a most quaint silhouette passes across the memory. Along the sky line of a rising ground between the road and the stream moves the well-

known figure of my friend, showing dark against the sky, in clerical surtout and soft wide-awake, the latter with its brim turned up at the sides, giving it in the silhouette the appearance of a cocked hat. He carries his fishing-rod "at the trail," with the butt to the front as being safer for the delicate and precious top-joint. Behind him, also on the sky-line, and keeping regular distance, moves a long and solemn procession of cows, gazing steadily ahead as if mesmerised, and, like him, disconnected with all the world. It was like a silent procession in a dream or in Ghost-land.

But disconnected with the world he certainly was not. No man was ever more thoroughly in touch with those among whom he lived, from the Laird to the pensioner of charity. All and sundry, young and old, knew him, and to know him was to love him. His sympathetic friendliness and genial humour endeared him to them all. Nor was he the man who would lose any opportunity to administer to child or senior a gentle hint which was none the less telling for its kindly form; or to do something for the honour, material or spiritual, of the noble church which he had been the means of building, and which, by the proximity of its striking proportions, made his "modest mansion" look more modest still.

On one occasion a party from a neighbouring town, being in the village, strolled in to look at the church, headed by a well-known grizzled worthy of that town, who was distinguished for his wealth, and also for the exceeding ability which he dis-

played in the art of keeping it for himself—ability so well recognised, that a neighbour with whom he often played whist made him an offer to take him on contract, and make a gentleman of him in the way of public subscriptions for five pounds a year. My friend, who knew them all, even to their personal traits, appeared quietly on the scene.

"We've just been admiring your church," said the worthy; "it's a grand church. There's just one thing about it which we think hardly in keeping with the rest: we think you want a new organ."

"Well," said my friend, who knew that if he got nothing else from that worthy, he could at any-rate count on the frank *bonhomie*, and the readiness that was never taken aback—"well, do you know, we've been thinking that ourselves; and we've been collecting a little money to get it. I suppose I may put down THE PROVOST OF —— for twenty pounds." The provost was, however, equal to the occasion, as he always was.

"Well," he said, with a solemn shake of the head, but a twinkle in his eye, "it does surprise me how people find out my generosity, considering the pains I'm at to keep it quiet; for I'm sure my left hand does not know what my right hand does."

Certainly in such cases the Provost adopted a method which was bound to be effectual, unless, indeed, his left hand could find out the non-existent.

No pastor ever knew his flock better than my friend, or had for them a more minute personal care. None entered more sympathetically into their joys and their sorrows; none ever more

thoroughly had them in his heart to live and die with them.

"He ne'er had changed, nor wished to change, his place."

He had been among them for five and thirty years. The fathers and mothers of the children of his flock had, many of them, been baptised by him. He watched over them all.

Among them was one jolly yeoman, clever, lively, and of University education. Without being what would be called "churchy," he was regular in his public religious duties; but he certainly was no ascetic, and as little like one as the typical figure of John Bull. One Easter Day he for some reason did not appear among the communicants—a most unusual thing. Next morning, as he was reading his paper, he heard the door-bell ring, and, thinking it was the postman, answered it himself. When he opened the door, there stood my friend, his clergyman, on the doorstep, with anxious seriousness all over his quaint countenance, and his hand extended.

"Mr ——, I hope you're better: I do hope you're better."

"Better! I'm quite well, thank you. Come in."

"But are you sure you're all right again?"

"There was never anything wrong with me. Come in."

"Well," said my friend, with a twinkle in his dark eye as he surveyed the robust form before him, "you do relieve my mind. I had begun to

fear that you had been keeping Lent so strictly that you had broken down at the very last moment."

Before he came as assistant to his predecessor, it had been the immemorial custom for the parson, at the close of the marriage ceremony, to kiss the bride. At the first wedding after his arrival he had taken a share in the ceremony, and his venerable principal closed it in the usual way. But the young assistant was too absent-minded, or too much "flustrated" to follow suit, notwithstanding that the bride seemed to expect it. He failed; and never on any subsequent occasion had courage to make up for his lack of duty to the old custom, which accordingly died out.

He was very different in this respect from the young Englishman who once on a similar occasion officiated in my stead. He was driven to the cottage where the wedding was to take place, in company with his friend, a lively and humorous Inspector of Schools, not unacquainted with practical joking. The young parson went into the cottage, and duly performed the ceremony, while his friend waited with idle hands outside in my dogcart. When he came out, his friend the Inspector, evidently desirous that all should be done decently and in order, asked anxiously, "Did you kiss the bride?"

"No," responded the young cleric, who had never observed any rubric directing such a thing.

"But, my good fellow, it's not considered a valid marriage in Scotland unless you kiss the bride."

"Oh, goodness!" he replied, "I didn't know

that," and incontinently rushed back into the middle of the wedding party, and amid arrested mirth and astonished faces embraced the blushing and wondering bride. She had never heard of the old custom; but the seniors present shrewdly suspected what had occurred outside.

Years ago, now, alas! the bodily presence of the beloved old country parson was taken from his flock and from his friends. My feelings drew me from the other end of Scotland to stand among the mourners round his grave. And when we had laid his body to rest under the north window of the noble chancel, which he loved so well, I felt, like the Ettrick Shepherd, when *he* had buried one of *his* friends, that "there was a sair change for the waur on the afternoon light" when the sad duty was done.

Keen, however, as was the pang of feeling that his companionship could be enjoyed in this life no more, and that he had become but a memory, there was, and is, in that memory nothing but brightness.

> "Light be the turf on thy tomb!
> May its verdure like emeralds be:
> There should not be the shadow of gloom
> In aught that reminds us of thee."

II.

AULD LUCKY SUMMERS.

Auld Lucky [Grannie] Summers was the daughter of a fisherman, the wife of a fisherman, and the mother and grandmother of fishermen. Looking away back into the past through many generations, you would behold her forefathers all pursuing the same hazardous calling. The family history had partaken of the characteristics belonging to that of all the seafaring race—continual hardship, frequent danger, and occasional dark days of crushing disaster. Of such a descent and such a life-history, her nature, nay even her face, could not fail to bear the mark, graven deep with no tender hand.

When I bring up her image on the tablets of memory, I see a face once comely enough, with the rich brunette complexion still remaining, bronzed indeed by exposure, and seamed and scarred with the lines of grief and care. But the dark eye is not dim, and the whole expression forbids the idea that the natural force is abated by the toils and trials of more than seventy years. Firmness, directness, and singleness of purpose are written in every line and movement, and there is a look which tells beyond a doubt that the word "flinch"

is not in her vocabulary, nor the idea belonging to it in her mind. Furthermore it would surprise no one who attentively looked at her to be told that anyone embodying such an idea in his character would be to her an object of unutterable pity, if not of contempt.

Telling forcibly against her complexion is her hair, still dark, and the old-fashioned, high-crowned "mutch" [cap], white as snow. Round her shoulders is a plaid of black and crimson "Rob Roy" tartan; and as she leans forward in her energetic, plodding walk, the creel, resting low on the gathers of her gray wincey petticoat, is poised and kept balanced by the breast-band. She turns neither to the right hand nor to the left as she makes steadily for her object, cleaving to it like the typical Scot who "gangs till he gets it." The whole picture, as she moves along instinct with individuality, is relieved, now against the pale green "bents" with the yellow sand showing through on the links, now against the unbroken, smooth sand of the shore, or the deep blue of the sea beyond. An Episcopalian like her forefathers, she had sat in her girlhood at the feet of Bishop Jolly —"the Saint of Moray"—whom George the Fourth and the Duke of Gordon could not behold "without thinking of Him who did no sin." She had not sat there in vain, and had forgotten neither his teaching nor him. "Eh! Mr Low!" she would say, "he wasna like a human [earthly] creatur'. Oh I wish I were in sight o' him." In those days thirty families, all remembered by her, went re-

gularly like her own, in spite of much petty persecution, from her native village to worship in Bishop Jolly's church in Fraserburgh. Now the land, which was then like the Garden of Eden, had become a desolate wilderness. Many were the causes both within and without the church of her baptism, which had contributed to this result. Revivalists, Plymouth Brethren, and such like, playing upon the excitable nature of her class, had scattered them to the ecclesiastical winds. Even her own relatives had gone, both there and at her married home, in spite of her powerful influence energetically exerted. She used to tell me of the effect of the east window of the church where she and I worshipped together, which is "set on a hill," a landmark far across the German Ocean. It would surprise many, no doubt, of all persuasions now. There was not a single figure in the window. It stands now as it was placed by my predecessor, with its simple symbolism—three equal lights in the one window, with the simple cross for the central symbol, and with, in less prominent positions, the *Agnus Dei*, the pillar and scourge, the equal-sided triangle, the spear, the hammer and nails, and the crown of thorns—nothing which by any possibility could be regarded as a graven image, or be supposed to be worshipped. The plain symbolism, and the direct reminders of the Saviour and His cross and passion, were all that my venerable predecessor had cared about. And who would have expected it? But she told me that the window cost the church the

allegiance of a few members. Truly a watchful eye, delicate tact, thorough knowledge, and a tender hand are wanted there as everywhere.

The excited and exciting preachers of fragmentary creeds she regarded as the unconscious enemies of the permanence of truth and religion. She resisted them with all her might. In many a stiff encounter did the old woman stand up for the church of her baptism; and many an enthusiastic and confident self-sent preacher had occasion to regret having rashly challenged her. She was never the assailant, unless to denounce some flagrant act of evil-doing. Her faith in her Heavenly Father and her Saviour, her devotional feelings and religious hopes she held too sacred to be passed from hand to hand among others, like the small change of the market-place. She particularly disliked discussing them with strangers; and had the most supreme contempt for those who seemed to regard the newest comer as the truest prophet. "Geordie!" she said, "Aye, *he's* aye ready to dance, and never speer wha he's takin' the flure wi'. If ony tinkler cam' out amo' the bents, and startit a hymn at the neuk o' the hoose, Geordie would dance doon the toon at his tail." When new-comers assailed her they met with a very different reception. She knew her Bible and her Catechism. She knew, moreover, the weak points of her adversary's creed, and never hesitated or feared to carry the war into the enemy's country. Indeed it was her favourite strategy, and those who assailed her were surprised to find themselves so

soon on the defensive. But she thought the risks of the encounter might as well be theirs as hers. And very generally, as she would have said, "they cam' loupin' awa, but aft gaed hirplin' hame."

On one occasion the victim was a relation of her own, who was denouncing all the organised religious bodies in the district on account of their slackness of discipline. "Noo," said he, "wouldna't be a great sin o' me to sit down at the Lord's table wi' ——, and ——, that I ken drinks and swears, and mony a deadly sin forbye?" "Oh, laddie," she answered, fastening on him a look like that of some masterful creature on its prey, "a better and a wiser nor you sat doon wi' Judas Iscariot."

The village in which stood her humble home was, like most fishing villages, on that part of the coast the frequent scene of strong religious excitement. It came almost as regularly as the storms of March. One storm was, on account of its frequent coincidence with Good Friday, known among the fishermen as "the Passion Storm." About all the religious storms there was a good deal of passion of another kind. There were certain men in the village and neighbourhood who took a prominent part in every one of them—not perhaps as chief speakers, but as introducers of these to the scene of their excited harangues. One of them once brought the hero of the hour to deal with Lucky Summers. He thought a man of such power —he was the newest star—would produce an impression even upon her obstinate heart. The old

woman, having returned home from a long and weary trudge, had lain down to rest. When her visitors appeared she knew what was coming, having passed through the like before, and sat up to face them as she had fearlessly faced others.

"You are getting an old woman now," said the preacher.

"When ye hae the burden o' near four-score years on your shou'ders, man," answered the old woman firmly, "ye winna need ony body to tell ye that."

"Are ye prepared to die?" asked the preacher solemnly.

"I'm prepared to speak about solemn things like that," she said, "to my ain minister, as I dae mony a time; but nae to ilka stranger that invades my house."

"But you're bound to tell me. You're bound to give a reason of the hope that's in you to every one that asketh you."

"I'm bound *to be ready* to gie't, according to my Bible, an' I *am* ready. But I winna answer you because ye hae nae right to speer."

"Is your soul saved?"

"I've tell't ye I winna answer ye. Sae ye may just gang your ways."

"Woman, you're going to hell."

"Man, ye're nae the Judge o' a' the Earth: ye're but a sinner like mysel, and ye canna put me there, nor yet tak' me out o't."

"Me a sinner! Me a sinner!" he cried, lifting up his hands, "I'm as pure as God!"

"Out o' my hoose wi' ye, ye blasphemer!" cried the old woman vehemently, pointing her bony finger at him. "And as for you," she added, turning sharply to his companion, "gang ye wi' him; and afore ye fetch a man to tell ither folk that they're gaun to hell, see whether ye canna mak' an honest tradesman o' yoursel'."

There was deadly point in the old woman's parting thrust, known assuredly to the victim, and certainly to *his* victims, who were not few. It was probably not the first time that she had given him to understand her conviction that where there was not honest dealing there could be no true religion, and that it would be wiser to get the beam out of his own eye before going round searching for motes in his brothers'.

Auld Luckie Summers had her full share of the toils and trials of life; but amid them all she bore herself with the same firm and stedfast demeanour. Looking around it was clear to the dullest eye that the whole strength of the household was concentrated in her alone. There was in her character an independence so truly Scotch and robust as hardly to allow independence to anyone else. All depended upon her; all were ruled by her, if not with a rod of iron, at least with a very firm sway indeed.

And truly she needed all her strength and firmness. There came a day when the clouds gathered darkly over her humble home. The hardness of the climate and the hardships of the fisherman's life at last told, and she could not disguise from her-

self the fact that her husband's strength had at last given way, and that death was about to part them. As I went in and out ministering by his deathbed, her tenderness became fully as noticeable as her strength. Her affections were clearly as strong as her will. It was plain that with her "Time ran back and fetched the age of gold," travelling back over many intervening years to the time which culminated on the day when John stood beside her a proud and happy bridegroom. Not a look or word was allowed to suggest a thought which would increase his distress at leaving his wife and children to face the world alone. She had been his comfort and stay in life: she was his support in the hour of death. The Saint of Moray was there unseen, ministering spiritual consolation by the hand of his unforgetting scholar.

It was not long till old John's trials were ended. Poor old man! Wearied with a life of toil, he recognised that his day's work was done, and went willingly and trustfully to his rest.

It was manifestly a staggering blow to his widow. It was like the blackness of darkness come down on her habitation. For a moment human nature broke down. But she thought of her children, and pulled herself together. Still the words that would come first to her lips showed how sore she felt the blow to be. "Shall I receive good at the hand of God, and shall I not receive evil?"

"It's sore, Lucky," said her friend and Pastor; "undoubtedly it's a sore stroke; it's a sharp pang

for human affection. But it's rest for your husband from toil and suffering, anxiety, and tears. And whatever you've lost, God still remains, and if you trust yourself to His hand He'll lead you by paths that you know not. I'm not sure that it is evil."

"God forgie me, sir, you've spoken the truth. He might hae perished mony a time in the sea, where I couldna hae held his han', or seen his last look in my face, or laid him in his last bed. God's good: it's me that's evil."

"Ay, Lucky, He's good. He gave you a good husband, and many happy days together. Think of all that John was to you, and say whether you shouldna thank Him."

"Oh, yes, yes, sir, for ever."

So we said the words in which the living remember the dead before God:—"We bless Thy holy name for all Thy servants departed this life in Thy faith and fear, beseeching Thee to give us grace so to follow their good examples, that with them we may be partakers of Thy heavenly kingdom."

"I bless Him, sir; I bless Him for all that John's been to me. I never noticed afore the meanin' o' thae words. But frae this day they're livin' words to me."

"Ah well, trust God. You know the proverb, 'Hae God, hae a'.' He'll help you through."

It might well have daunted her to look up from her grief on a grown-up family, of whom those still remaining at the old fireside were almost as

dependent upon her as when they were children. But nothing daunted her. Not a thought of flinching or fleeing crossed her mind. Not a word of repining crossed her lips. Her lot was the burden laid on her back by her heavenly Father, who would remove it, or her, when His will was accomplished. As the day came round, the daily bread would come also. As task or trial came, strength and stedfastness would be given. "As thy days, so shall thy strength be," was her belief and her motto; and nobly she put forth her strength at the call of love and duty.

So staunch auld Lucky Summers valiantly fought her fight and bore her burden till her Father called upon her to lay it down. Now she is with the majority; once more, I trust, and for ever, in sight of the Saint of Moray.

I am sure that the Church Militant is very appreciably the poorer that she has gone.

III.

A STURDY OLD CALVINIST.

Old James was to those who knew his life-history in many ways an exceptional man. In the matter of religion he was an exception in a family of staunch hereditary Episcopalians, for he was an out and out Calvinist and Presbyterian. Yet even to his Episcopalian friends and relatives this fact, though the subject of regret, was not matter for surprise. At an early age he had been left fatherless, and had been obliged to earn his bread in service. It happened that his first master was a Presbyterian of the strictest type, and also a man of sincere and sterling piety. In George Dempster's house Burns' description of "The Cottar's Saturday Night" was true of every night. The supreme place of God in human life was acknowledged by the reverent reading of His word, and by earnest unwritten prayer which forgot no member of the household. "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord," was the guiding principle of the worthy man. It was not only in words that he served God. He treated the boy who herded his cows as he would have treated his own brother's son.

It was to the boy's credit that his spiritual nature was touched by such a character; and not unnatural that at an uncritical age he should transfer to the Presbyterian creed the veneration which he felt for his Presbyterian master.

At first, no doubt, he did not reason very much about it, but acted on the general feeling that the creed of such a man could not be far wrong. In time, however, he was obliged to clear up his ideas of the creed; for his younger brother, William, grew up a staunch Episcopalian, with intellectual gifts more than equal to his own, with an unresting activity of mind, and with a love of discussion and argument which waged perpetual war against the Calvinistic position.

Whether or not it was with full knowledge of its creed that James had identified himself with Calvinism, he certainly had capacity enough to make a good stand for his side—capacity which in another sphere in due time made him a master instead of a servant. He had activity of mind which in other circumstances would have made him a great inventor, and brought him a great fortune. He made a pen out of a thin bit of brass, when the only pen he had ever heard of was the ancient quill. He taught himself to take to pieces and put together clocks and watches, and actually made a watch that struck the hours. He made a violin, which, however, was distinguished rather for strength than sweetness. Later on he invented some improvements for the machinery of his meal-mill. One dark night the whole valley was thrown

into a state of consternation and awe, the old women thinking that the promised sign had appeared in the heavens, and that the Day of Judgment had come. Certainly the appearances were unusual. What seemed a blazing comet of portentous magnitude, with a tail of brilliant sparks, swung backwards and forwards, with an occasional threatening swoop over the valley. But it was only the work of James, who had brought a large peat to the requisite condition in the fire at the mill-kiln, and fixing it in a wire cage attached to the tail of a large kite had sent the said kite aloft with the result of a very great sensation. For some people actually saw the Archangel with the trump of God, which no doubt was the kite occasionally illumined by a shower of sparks from its tail.

As long as they were in the world together he and his brother William continued their theological combat. The thirty years' war was nothing to it; it was nearer twice thirty years. I daresay the effect was to drive them both to still greater extremes. Certainly James held the doctrine of Reprobation in all its rigidity. The non-elect were neither redeemed, nor called, nor justified, nor adopted, nor sanctified, nor saved; but "to the praise of God's glorious justice" were passed by "and ordained to dishonour and wrath for their signs"—"thrown out just like a curn [lot of] rotten sybos" [onions]. I remember him well, palsied with age, steadying his head against the wall behind his chair, that he might discharge, as it were,

the "sybos" comparison with deadlier aim and effect.

Of course he had no doubt *he* was one of the elect. His brother had no objection to his believing in God's love so far as to be assured that he was himself elect; but often called upon him to show wherein lay the "glorious justice" of not giving the same chance to every one else, seeing they were no further fallen in Adam than he was. They never succeeded in settling the question to the satisfaction of both parties.

Men so sure of their own election have sometimes been charged with self-righteousness and even hypocrisy. Burns says—

> "But I gae mad at their grimaces,
> Their sighin', cantin', grace-proud faces,
> Their three-mile prayers, and half-mile graces,
> Their raxin' conscience,
> Whase greed, revenge, and pride disgraces
> Waur nor their nonsense.

When he wrote this, Burns was thinking of "Holy Willie." James, however, was a very different man. He was neither self-righteous nor hypocritical. He indulged in no supercilious judging or despising of his neighbours. He had the truest fraternal affection for his life-long antagonist, whose judgment he trusted in earthly affairs fully as much as his own, and whose equally fraternal help he often received. There was neither greed, revenge, nor pride in him. Neither could he justly be depicted with a "sighin', cantin', grace-proud face." But there is no

denying "the three-mile prayers, and half-mile graces." He was once rallied by his brother on the length of his grace, which certainly might have suggested the idea that he expected to be heard for his much speaking, and thought God did not know what he had need of without very detailed information. His answer came, quick as thought—

"I wasna speakin' to *you*."

"If ye wasna speakin' to me, ye was speakin' *for* me, and hinderin' meat and wark a ridic'lous length o' time."

"Prayers and provender hinder nae man," quoted James.

"Maybe no," retorted William; "but the prayers has hindered the provender a good while this time at any rate."

"Weel, get on noo, then, and nae mair o' your arguin'. Whenever I neuk [corner] ye, ye just flee [fly] up."

In such manner the twice thirty years' war went on.

It produced no change in the views of James. But it drew to a close as the time drew near when the veteran must join the host across the flood. As it began to dawn towards that "other morn" which was about to break, I think things began to seem somewhat different to him. At all events he was visited one day by an old Calvinistic crony, who had many a time rejoiced with him on their being both numbered among the elect, and who thought no reflection could be so comforting in the hour of death.

"What a blessin', James," he said, "it maun be to you, lyin' there, to ken that ye're safe among the elect, and that your covenanted place is prepared at the Marriage Supper o' the Lamb!"

"George, man," was the reply, "I've been thinkin' sin' I lay doon, that the Prodigal took pot-luck, and wasna very far wrang."

He spake it not in cultured phrase, but evidently he had come to feel that the ultimate foundation of the sinner's hope lies in the Father's love—the source of every blessing from the greatest to the least that His erring children have received or will receive, and, moreover, the binding clause of all the covenants.

> "The soul's dark cottage, battered and decayed,
> Lets in new light through chinks that time has made;
> Stronger by weakness, wiser men become,
> As they draw near to their eternal home."

IV.

THE AULD MAN.

O the Auld Man! the Auld Man!
  Lang gane although he be,
How bright upon the memory
  He aft comes back to me!
He comes, and I'm a boy again,
  Wi' neither dread nor care;
Secure, whate'er the moments bring,
  Because the Auld Man's there.

While calm around the auld hearth-stane
  The gloamin' gathers slow,
How aft I see him in his chair
  In the ingle's ruddy glow!
I see the broad benignant brow,
  The lines o' thought and care,
The fire-light glancin' on his locks—
  A halo roun' his hair.

How strong and staunch and true he looks!
  As if while earth he trod,
Unblenched for truth and right he stood,
  Firm as the hills of God.
But there's a look within his een,

As on the fire they gaze—
I ken the picture in his heart
Is nae the flichterin' blaze.

He sees the little company
That's marshalled roun' his knee;
He sees the battle sair o' life
That nane o' them can flee;
He plans to shield ilk callow head
To train ilk heart and e'e,
That stainless victors they may stand
Upon the day they dee.

The onset keen o' wild Desire;
Fierce Passion's swift surprise;
The ill companion's treacherous lure
To where the ambush lies;
He paints them a' and bids his band
Stand stedfast ane and a',
And heed their faithfu' Captain's word
Whatever them befa'.

And when her wakenin' breath the Morn
Draws o'er the fragrant land,
She sees him stand to bide the brunt
Before his artless band.
And nought for self, and a' for them
Toil on the parent pair;
If but the bonnie heads be safe,
Content, they seek nae mair.

O Auld Man! O Auld Man!
What joy it was to thee,

When still and calm the Day o' Rest
Rose bright o'er hill and lea!
Thy heart gaed wi' the lark's first sang
To fill the lift wi' praise,
Wi' thousand woodland echoes joined
And the river's rushing lays.

Wi' neighbours met, thou ledd'st thy bairns
While sweet the laverock sang,
And to the House o' God we trudged
Nor thought the hours were lang.
And oh! the Auld Man's heart was full,
When upward to the skies
He heard in the Great Father's House
His bairns' praises rise.

On homeward road while some would speak
O' hapless souls passed by,
He reasoned still the loving Christ
For every man did die.
O' sic debate our elders might
Unheeded kick the ba';
Nae father we kent e'er could rest
Unless he had us a'.

Wi' him our sacred lore we learnt
Aroun' the evenin' fire,
And sweet the Saviour's praises sang—
A bright and happy choir.
And sweetly tuned ilk heart awoke
At Monday labour's ca',
To step wi' God into the week
Secure whate'er befa'.

O brave Auld Man! the world he faced,
  Nor thought it hard to dare,
If he might gird wi' triple guard
  Our mither's gentler care.
And now our front-rank man is fa'en,
  It's we the brunt man bear:
May we the hero never shame,
  When laid beside him there.

O Auld Man! O dear Auld Man!
  Thy rest, sweet may it be!
Green be the sod above thy breast,
  And green thy memory!
When I forget thy tender heart,
  And a' it was to me,—
When I forget the Auld Man,
  May I forgotten be!

KATE.

Let no reader be deluded by this heading. He is not about to look on a picture of woman's loveliness, shown in situations of tragic pathos, to move the heart with the beauty of patience in suffering, or of constancy faithful alike in sunshine and storm. Kate was the Parson's pony. But she was an honour to her kind.

She was a "gift-horse"—the gift of the Parson's flock, to carry him about amongst them over the wide district, ten miles by six, in which their homes were scattered, while he sought to minister to them "in all time of their tribulation, in all time of their wealth, and in the hour of death."

If the givers "looked her in the mouth," which, knowing them as I do, I am pretty sure they did before they gave her to him, I can certify that *he* never did so afterwards. He had no temptation to do such a thing; for if during the ten succeeding years, he did his work as well as Kate did hers, they were certainly a happy people. However this may be, I am sure the Parson and Kate, notwith-

standing stiff north-easter, Tay Bridge gale, or paralysing snowstorm, were happy in their work.

The whip, which, for reasons facetiously set forth at the presentation, but which during the years that have gone by since then have strangely faded from my recollection, was given to the Parson's wife. But, though I say it, it might with perfect safety been given to the Parson. Kate was an example, even to the most willing horse. The harness wore out, and had to be renewed, but the whip remained as good as new.

Kate entered thoroughly into the spirit of her work, and went about it with no little reflection. She knew the home of every family in the Parson's flock, where her four white stockings and her white face were recognised afar off. She never made mistakes. She knew the places where the boy or girl, who as a matter of form held her while I paid my visit, was in the habit of giving her a piece of oatcake before starting. She never seemed to think that the time to start had arrived until that ceremony had been duly performed. She also knew the places where there was no such custom, and, whatever she thought, gave no token of feeling that something had been omitted or forgotten. When we set out she had a natural tendency to suppose that we should miss none of our places of call, and suggested turning up to everyone of them in turn as we went along. If we happened to meet "Collyhill," she knew the features of his horse, and halted alongside as naturally as if she had been pulled up. She knew the Parson and he would

not pass each other with a mere nod or a threadbare remark about the weather. If she had to pass the furthest outposts of the congregation, she was able at once to infer where she was going; she knew it was Peterhead, and would go straight to "Laing's," whose very legible sign-board appeared to be as legible to her as to anyone else. If it was on another road, she would go straight to "Lamont's" at Ellon. If it was on another—the worst road but best loved of all—she would go straight to the Parsonage at Longside, and look round for "Thomas." To go to a place once was enough; she laid it up in her memory.

When a Peterheadian gave a picnic, it would be either at Inverugie Castle (now, alas! no more) or at the Bullers of Buchan. At the Bullers Kate was at home, and spent the time profitably in "Auld Pottie's" stable while I went in and out among the fishermen at the Bullers or North-Haven. But I was once invited to a picnic at Inverugie, and on the day appointed set out with my wife beside me. As we started Kate evidently wondered where we were all going this time. She tried successively every place from "Myres" to "Collyhill" and "Nethermuir," which was anything but "nether," for it was on the top of a hill. When it turned out to be not even "Nethermuir," she was beyond the limit of her *data*, and could only wonder. I myself was not very sure about the road beyond that point. But in due course we drove through below the railway, and saw Inverugie Castle at some little distance, with the road in

front branching to the right and also to the left hand—the right hand branch pointing in the direction of the castle. To the right we went, but by and by discovered that we had gone wrong, and, turning Kate round, soon arrived by the left hand branch at Inverugie.

Seven years afterwards my successor was invited to a similar picnic, and Kate had to go the same road. When not allowed to stop at "Nethermuir," she thought, "Oh, then, it's Inverugie." She remembered everything about it, and when through below the railway turned to the left. But the Parson of that day thought, as I had thought before him, that the right-hand branch was the proper road, and with some difficulty compelled Kate to take it. Very soon, however, he began to suspect that Kate knew better than he did, and slackened the rein, when of her own accord she turned round and took him to Inverugie the proper way. I daresay she had her own thoughts about the affair; among them being that evidently Parsons did not know everything.

When I left her behind me to help my successor among the old flock, she introduced him to them. I had given him a list of the people, with which he sallied forth. They got on beautifully; she knew exactly where to go. But at one point a hitch occurred. Kate halted opposite some cottages not mentioned in his list. He urged her on, but she stood fast, and declined to move. Possibly he begun to suspect an error in his list. But just then a woman looked out at one of the doors, and

he sought light on the question by asking, "Does anyone belonging to St. James's live here?" "Eh, na, sir," was the reply, "but the puir cratur minds upon auld Janet, and doesna ken that she's deid." As a matter of fact, the "puir cratur" was at auld Janet's funeral, but had not divined that she was the last of the household.

Kate was eminently Scotch. The proverb has it that "A Scotsman taks his mark frae a misfortun'"—dates things from "the year o' the short corn," and the like. Kate did not easily forget a misfortune. There was one which stuck in her mind for a long time; and no wonder, for it shook her faith in *terra firma*. She had taken me to a clerical meeting at Banff, and then on to Portsoy, where I put her up at an inn. The ostler there washed her feet after her long journey—a cooling process which she thoroughly approved. During the next two or three days she took me and my wife short journeys to visit friends in that neighbourhood, the feet-washing following always at the end of the day's work.

Towards the end of the week I was on my way home again, and we had got as far as the woods of Byth, Kate having thus done about twenty miles of her journey. I did not intend to stop just yet for her feed; but seeing a roadside watering-place at the edge of the wood, I turned her round to let her cool her mouth with two or three mouthfuls of water. Kate had no more suspicion than I had; but when she put her fore-feet on the moist place in front of the watering, down

they went, the whole length of her fore-legs. She was in a very uncomfortable position, with her hind feet high up on the hard edge of the road, and drew them forward to get them a little lower. She got more than she wanted, for down they went too. I sprang to the ground, undid the buckles of the harness, pushed the trap across the road out of the way, and took some pieces of wood out of the mud near her. Meanwhile she had been struggling to better her position. With some difficulty I helped her round till she got hold of the hard roadside with one of her fore-feet, when with a desperate effort she extricated herself, and stood once more on solid ground.

But what a mess! I took off her as much of the mud as I could, and rubbed her down with long grass from the edge of the wood. I had nearly finished yoking her again when there came up a travelling merchant with a spring cart loaded with merchandise, with which he transacted business with goodwives along his route, receiving butter, eggs, fowls, &c., and providing household supplies. He pulled up, running his eye over Kate, and the following colloquy ensued:—

"Ye've been in, hae ye?"

"You've hit it, exactly.'

"Ye've been gey clever, and your beast tae, or ye wouldna hae been out yer lane [alone]. I've been at the takin' o' a heap o' beasts out there. They aye gang in, especially if they be nowt beasts."

"You're a fine set of folks hereabouts, to set a

trap like that for me at the roadside. You should have had a fence to keep me out, instead of a watering to tempt me in. But you're too late for the sixpence to-day; I've done it myself."

A queer smile played round his mouth, and he said, "Weel, ye've wrought for the saxpence yersel thi' day, onyway. I can see that. Good day wi' ye."

The adventure took a good deal out of Kate, and she was longing for the end of her journey a good while before it came. In due course, however, she recognised that she was within her accustomed beat, and, lifting up her eyes and recognising the spire of St. James's—"the Church visible"—which was as well known to her as to me, she neighed in cheerful recognition, and with renewed spirit ran on till she found herself at home. When taken out of the shafts she immediately held up her near fore-foot to be washed—an action which I interpreted for the man, and she had her wish. But for many a day she avoided moist-looking places, or, if she could not get round them, tested the solidity of the bottom with her off fore-foot before trusting herself to them. At the woods of Byth she and I had been equally ignorant and unsuspicious; but sometimes she knew more than I did. On one occasion she had taken me to an evening gathering a long way off, and before we got home every one had gone to bed. It was the middle of summer, and there was quite good light. So I disturbed nobody, but unyoked her myself. She was at that time of year put into the field all night,

and usually was in so great a hurry to get there that she would hardly wait to get the harness taken off. That night, however—as lovely a night as one could desire—she not only stood still till all the harness was removed, but when I took her by the forehead tuft to lead her to the gate of the field, she resisted, and pulled to get to the stable. "Well," I thought, "this is very unusual. But I know you to be a sensible beast, and that you have some reason for it; so I'll give you your own way." I put her into the stable, and gave her food. Before morning we had the most tremendous thunderstorm that had occurred for ten years.

Kate always recognised her friends. Most people took no notice of her wishes, nor observed that she was endeavouring to make them known, though unable to speak the English language. But one did observe. She knew it, and depended on him. If I came out of the door of the Parsonage when she was tethered in the field beside the garden, where she had picked bare all the ground she could reach, she at once called my attention by a low murmuring "nicher," being sure that it would be understood and attended to. If, when others were occupied, I went to harness her myself, she knew my footstep before it reached the stable door; and if her stall was empty would repeatedly reach her mouth up as far as it could get for the stall-collar towards the hay sticking over the edge of the hay-loft above, signifying that she wished the said stall-collar taken off first, that she might have two or three mouthfuls of the hay

while I was putting on the harness. She had perfect confidence that she would be understood, and probably so far indulged.

And Kate did not forget her friends. After an absence in my present charge of a year and a half, I paid a visit to the old home. In the accustomed place she stood ready yoked in the trap. When I came out talking to my successor she knew my voice, and lifted up her head in lively recognition. We went away together to see some of the old people; and coming to a somewhat steep hill we both got out of the trap and walked side by side conversing up the slope, while Kate followed with the empty trap behind. As I walked with my hands behind my back, she hastened her steps, and poked her nose into my hand. I am sure she meant "Have you forgotten me? I have not forgotten you." I let her know that I had not forgotten. What is more, as my readers see, I have not forgotten her yet. As I said before, if the Parson was as faithful to his Master, and as kindly as Kate, his flock was a happy one, and Cruden was a happy place.

VI.

AULD SANDY MILNE.

Many a flower by man unseen
  Gladdens lone recesses ;
Many a nameless brook makes green
  Haunts its beauty blesses ;
Many a scattered seed on earth
  Brings forth fruit where needed—
Such the humble Christian's worth,
  By the world unheeded.

Old Sandy Milne was certainly "by the world unheeded." To his family and relatives in Cruden and Slains he was of course very well known; and none of them was the worse for knowing him. To the fishermen living within half a dozen miles of the Ward of Cruden, as it was then called, he was also more or less well known. To those landsmen of the district who worshipped with him in St. James's Church, he was known by face and figure. To the noble family in Slains Castle, whose knowledge of the dwellers on their estate, "their births and their bridals, their blisses and dools," was an example to all in like position, he was also well known. Beyond these—and their number was not very great—he was not only by the world unheeded, but to the world unknown.

But he was known to his God and Saviour. I think it is no rash thing to say that he was a humble Christian. I, at least, felt for him a warm regard and respect from the time that I came to know him as a member of my flock.

By that time he was an old man, and had seen some notable things in his time. He was employed at a farm in the parish when the extraordinary storm of wind and blinding snow occurred which wrecked the *Oscar* emigrant ship in the Bay of Aberdeen, with terrible loss of life. Its effect in his case was a contrast; it snowed him up in the barn.

But his life was a seafaring one, exposed to all the trials and hardships and dangers of the fisherman's calling on an exposed and rock-bound coast. Every time he went to sea, he went not knowing what would befall him there. Not only his own dangers, but in due time those of his family also, gave him not infrequently a troubled hour. You may get an inkling of it by picturing to yourself a scene which I well remember. The calm of the morning with its glassy sea had changed without warning into a raging storm. One by one the boats struggled out of the distance towards the shore. Picture the old man creeping about among the excited crowd of "wives and mithers 'maist despairin'" gathered on the shore, straining his eyes to descry in the gathering darkness his son's sail, which was one of the two yet to come in. Gradually they emerge, tossing in the terrific sea, now visible on the crest, now

hidden in the trough of the waves. The crowd holds its breath as they plunge towards the mouth of the creek, and some run for lanterns to guide them in the deepening gloom. The foremost, after being more than once supposed to have foundered when lost to sight in the trough of the sea, with the greatest difficulty at last gets in, and is safe. But it is not his son's. It can now nowhere be seen. It was seen a moment ago; now it is gone. All hope is given up by the crowd, and old Sandy vanishes. Men do not like to intrude on the old man. But when at last spoken to he is perfectly calm. "When the cry gaed out that the ither ane was doon, I think he heard it, and made up his mind that he couldna get in, and I saw him stan' out. If it's the Lord's will that she's weathered it, he'll be safe in Peterhead."

And so it was. The old man's eyes had seen what younger eyes, intent on the nearer boat, had not noticed. "There's a Han' aboon a'," was his habitual saying, as if putting the matter into that Hand, and that Hand his inner eye had seen. It justified and rewarded his trust when late in the evening, drenched and dripping, but safe, his son walked in.

But his experience of the sea was not confined to the boat of the Cruden line-fisher, or even of the herring-fishers from Peterhead. At an earlier period of his life he had taken service with the whalers, and had gone "bound for the northern seas to face the frost and cold." The glamour of the Arctic regions had cast its spell over him. To

his latest days the remembrance of it had charms for him; and nothing gave him more pleasure than to live those Arctic days over again, describing them to me. And I, on my side, enjoyed not only his descriptions, but his delight, as he

> pondered o'er the past,
> On moments of delight that were
> Too beautiful to last.

I suspect that it was in the past that most of his enjoyments were now found. By the time I knew him he was past work, except in the form of baiting or mending lines, or repairing a torn net, and going out, as a special treat, in the calm days of summer to shoot a line, when the younger men were away at the herring-fishing. His skill and knowledge were also valuable to go out in a quiet day in summer with one like myself, anxious to introduce a friend to the rock-scenery in the neighbourhood of the bay; when every rock would be introduced by names such as Jamie Tam, the Little Doonans, or the Pictarnities' Craig, accompanied by the reasons why the names were given.

But he suffered greatly at times from the effects of an accident, when a boat's mast falling across him had caused a double rupture; and if his belt went wrong on the way home from church, or perhaps from Peterhead, he suffered greatly. But the patient old man seldom alluded to his suffering, unless it may have been to his wife, or to me, to explain an absence from church. I have received many less valid excuses.

He knew how to use his Prayer Book at home, and his Bible and Hymn Book, too. I used to provide him with a *Churchman's Almanack*, to make it easier for him.

He was not so tall as the general run of the native fishermen. He was unable to carry himself so erect as the younger men; but the bend was due less to old age than to the effects of his accident. I do not think I remember him wearing a coat. His full dress was a short blue jacket, and his trousers were carefully turned up at the foot. His face, with its clear-cut features and well-moulded chin, was bronzed and tanned with exposure on the sea and by the sea-side, till in summer it was almost as dark as that of a Red Indian; and about the village he wore a scarlet Kilmarnock night-cap. His hair, as plentiful as in his youth, was well mixed with grey. But about his mouth and eyes kindliness and gentleness had written their signatures, while at the same time that of stedfastness was not lacking. His face reminded one of the lines of Pope:—

> So unaffected, so composed a mind;
> So firm, yet soft; so strong yet so resigned.

And truly old Sandy needed them all—firmness and strength of principle to adhere to his faith; softness to turn away wrath, and ease off the head seas which he encountered; and resignation to carry him through the troubles which he could neither avoid nor overcome.

For it was not all plain sailing with the kindly

old man. His family were all grown up, and making their own living, which was more than he was now able to do. His eldest son, who had inherited most of the kindly traits of the old man, lived a long way off. Sandy's comfort or discomfort depended largely on other relatives, whose religion was that of the Plymouth Brethren, and not mixed with much of the milk of human kindness for those who did not embrace the same. One of their pleasures seemed to lie in announcing to all who could not pronounce their Shibboleth that they were for that reason going to hell. It formed the outstanding feature in what they called preaching the Gospel. Moreover, they assailed everyone with the soothing information. They saw no distinction between "letting their light shine before men" and thrusting their candle in every one's eye. In due course the atmosphere in poor old Sandy's neighbourhood was anything but serene.

> "Discord, dire sister of the slaughtering power!
> Small at her birth, but rising every hour;
> While scarce the skies her horrid head can bound,
> She stalks on earth, and shakes the world around."

And discord was very distasteful to old Sandy. It never disturbed the settled convictions of his mind; but the sounds of wordy war grated on his ear. Peace was his natural element—"Quietness is best," was his frequent saying. The war might be carried on by

> The stormy adversary, an inhuman wretch,
> Incapable of pity, void and empty
> From every drachm of mercy,

but Sandy responded not in kind. Samuel Butler had evidently known the sort, as Sandy knew them, but met them in different style—

> Fools are stubborn in their way,
> As coins are hardened by th' allay ;
> And obstinacy's ne'er so stiff
> As when 'tis in a wrong belief.

Amid the strife of tongues, however, Sandy continued undisturbed in his conviction of the safety of the old foundation; and they never succeeded in inducing him to give up his old faith, and substitute for it faith in a phrase. He could not perhaps have carried on very triumphantly the wordy combat. He lacked fierceness and noise. But he acted in the spirit of words which he had never read—

> "Lean on faith, look up rejoicing ;
> We are wiser than we know."

And the turmoil around never embittered him, or put his kindly nature out of tune.

> Churlish despite ne'er looked from his calm eye,
> Much less commanded in his gentle heart ;
> To baser men fair looks he would impart.

Old Sandy was not a man of war. That *rôle* was played by his neighbour, staunch "Auld Lucky Summers," whose natural force was not abated by the daily burden of four score years. Her caustic weapon flashed without sparing about the head of the man who would discard the order of all Christian time for an "any-man ministry." "Him! Humph! Aye! Gin ony *tinkler* would come out amo' the

bents, an' stan' up at the neuk o' the hoose, an' sing a Sankey stroud, *he* would be doon the toon at his tail!" Of course it was my duty to sustain and guide, and provide with ammunition the forces at whose head I was placed. As, however, the busy time of the fishing came round the stress and strain of battle relaxed, only the enemy was never changed in spirit.

At last, after ten years, circumstances brought about my severance from the old flock, and my transference to the opposite corner of Scotland. It was a grief to look no longer on their faces, but I still had them in my heart. Sandy's *Churchman's Almanack* went to him every New-year, till at last one year it arrived barely in time to find him in this life. My successor had continued the church's ministrations to him. He died in the faith in which, through the trials of poverty, suffering, and storm, he had lived—a faithful soul. Those who lived around him, and had tried in vain to engulf him in their sect, took his body from which the spirit had departed, and buried it without the familiar words which he had loved being pronounced over it in the Church's name, proclaiming the triumph over death and the hope of a glorious resurrection through Him who was dead and is "alive for evermore." But they could not take from him the knowledge of that ever-living Redeemer, nor jeopardise the lot in which he shall stand at the latter day. As around his open coffin they thanked God that they were not as other men, and consigned all who were not even as they to

perdition, they might have seen on the fine old face, as it lay in the solemn dignity of death supremely indifferent to their heartless proceedings, a look which might have gone to their hearts with the sharpest reproof if they had had eyes to see and hearts to understand.

As he often said, "There's a Han' aboon a'." We will not think of them. We will remember old Sandy, now landed on the further shore, bequeathing a memory wholesome and pleasant to his friends left behind.

Photo by W. L. Low.

Polnar Chapel.

VII.

POLNAR CHAPEL.

On the north bank of the Don, where, nearly two miles west of Inverurie, its waters are joined by the Polnar Burn, there stands in the western angle formed by the junction, and rising abruptly from the level haughs to the height of some fifteen or twenty feet, a beautiful little wooded platform, the top of which is enclosed by a stone dyke. It is a romantic spot, full in my early days of stimulus for the juvenile imagination.

All round were remembrances connected with a misty antiquity. On all sides were spots where the discovery of urns and cists sent the thoughts travelling back through many generations. Beyond the brow of the hill to the north, not visible, but neither far off nor forgotten, was the Druidical Circle of Aquhorties, perfect as when it witnessed the cruel rites of Druidism. From the same direction the "Mither Tap" of Ben-na-chie just peeped over the smaller hills into the valley. Across the river in the opposite direction rose the steep wooded brow of Roquharold. Beyond the field on the eastern bank of the burn rose the hill of Davo, once crowned by a cairn covering an ancient cist, and

bearing also on the hillside in an opening in the wood, what was known as "the Deevil's Stane"—a large whinstone boulder, having on its flat top three distinct prints of a cloven hoof. Down the slope towards Inverurie was a flat space, once dotted with numerous cairns, the reputed scene of a battle, if not of two battles, in days long gone by. From the little platform straight down the river and running into a bend of the same was Ardtannies, whose name, signifying "The Deevilicks' Knowe," or "promontory of the little devils," or fairies, was suggestive in the misty moonlight of scenes in which "bonnie Kilmeny" might have taken a part. The scene is as peaceful as that when—

> Late, late in the gloaming, when all was still,
> When the fringe was red on the westlin' hill,
> The reek o' the cot hung o'er the plain
> Like a little wee cloud in the world its lane,
> Late, late in the gloaming Kilmeny came hame.

When my childish eyes first looked with a kind of awe on the "Chapel Yardie" (as we called the space inside the wall on the top of the wooded platform) it consisted simply of a large oblong mound, possibly eight feet high, in the middle of the enclosure, covered and surrounded with large hardwood trees, with a very old hawthorn at the east end, and a grave between the mound and the north-western corner. It turned out that the mound was the grave of Polnar, or St. Apollinaris', Chapel. For "the Laird," as Mr Gordon of Manar was affectionately called, began to take an interest in the place; and when his men had done with it,

the mound was gone, and that which the mound had buried was brought to light—namely, about four feet (at the gables a little more) of the walls of an oblong building, with a door at the south-west corner, and the aged hawthorn still at the east end. This was all that remained of Polnar Chapel, which, eight hundred years ago, was the church of the parish, with subordinate chapels at "Inrurin" and "Munkegin," the latter of which is now called Keith-hall.

In those days Polnar Chapel was called Rothael Kirk. The uncertainty of etymology is proverbial. In that field, one may say with more than usual point, *ex quovis quodvis fit*. Yet the conjecture may be hazarded that Rothael is derived from *Roth*—a mound, and *abhall* (pronounced *avall*, or by still further softening, *ael*)—an apple tree or orchard. It would thus signify the mound of the apple trees. The idea, at all events, harmonises with the existence, outside the dyke, on the southern slope of the mound, of an aged, gnarled, and moss-encrusted crab-apple tree, whose fruit, in spite of a sourness beyond that of the most crabbed old age, we could scarcely allow time to ripen. Under the roots of the trees which were taken away by the excavations, were found four small memorial stones, with only initials and dates. These suggested that they commemorated some of the Fergusons, who owned the surrounding land from 1655 to 1699. It is now the resting place of the dear old Laird's mortal clay, and also of those of his family who have "crossed the flood." One,

indeed, the eldest son, is elsewhere. The thought of him brings to mind the lines of Mrs Hemans' *Graves of a Household*:—

> One lies where southern vines are drest
> Above the noble slain ;
> He wrapped his colours round his breast
> On a blood-red field of Spain.

Hugh, handsome and spirited, succumbed to sunstroke in India after taking part in the relief and capture of Lucknow, where one of his uncles was among the slain. He lies in the cemetery of far-off Lucknow, beside many gallant comrades. For all that, he will one day stand side by side with those who are resting in Rothael Kirk, as he is to-day held in the same remembrance.

On this spot the sacred name of the Saviour, and the Glad Tidings, were first spoken probably by the Culdees of Monymusk, a place where the lamp of learning has always been kept burning, and which, at the period when William the Norman was conquering England, was to the Earldom of the Garioch the centre of civilisation.

The spirit of peace still broods over the scene amid the soothing rush of the waters of the Don, and the gentler murmur of the Polnar Burn. Mingling with the murmur of the waters, the attentive ear picks up the delightful quiet song of the water ouzel, while the trees are ringing with the music of thrush and chaffinch, and from the top of the dyke comes the contented refrain of the yellow-breasted yorling. Earth and sky are alike filled with delicious harmony; for from the green

fields by the "Chapel Yardie" the lark has risen from her nest in the springing corn, and is trilling forth her love-inspired lay high among the clouds. Truly the spirit of peace and harmony is there.

Across the burn, beyond the old ash trees, and the wild cherry trees of delicious memory which fringe its banks, lies the spot (formerly marked by a heap of stones and by bushes of whin and broom) where once stood the dwelling of the ancient vicars of Inverurie. No doubt it was a humble dwelling. No doubt all the arrangements were primitive, from the stepping-stones across the burn to the heather-thatched roof of Rothael Kirk. But we may believe that they enjoyed as keenly as we should the sweet peacefulness of the scene, the richly-wooded hill-sides around leading the eye ever upwards, and the primroses by the banks of the burn in spring. They would find the spot a natural home for peace and devotion.

It pleases one to think of surroundings so appropriate environing the grave that holds the mortal remains of "the Laird." While he lived he was a centre of harmony and kindly influence round and round the happy valley. He drew together his own class; he drew to himself and to his class the hearts of his tenantry. He was "the Laird;" but he was a farmer as well as they. He was a leader in the progress of agriculture towards making the valley a veritable garden. He knew all the processes, the difficulties, the anxieties, and the pleasures of farming. When his tenants went to "the House" to pay the rent (for he thought it

his duty to be his own factor, and manage his own business, and discharge his own stewardship) they found him in perfect touch with them all. He was interested in them; he was interested in their families; he delighted in helping by advice and otherwise the advancement and success of their sons. One of them, at least, will never forget him. Keen sportsman he was, and deadly shot; but he never let his game be the means of injustice to his people. And if any gamekeeper had been the cause of any such thing, he would have been made acquainted with the severe side of the Laird's nature. He would not have done it again.

And "the Lady," his wife, was a help-meet for him in all good things. Like their tenantry, they had their trials and sorrows and bereavements. But they ruled their home so as to be a model to all around.

Now the Laird's mortal part rests in the "Chapel Yardie." His memory is no discord in the lovely scene.

VIII.

A GOOD STEWARD.

In the red granite rock scenery fringing the coast of Cruden there is no feature more famous than that called the Bullers of Buchan. The visitor who desires to view its striking features is conducted down a zig-zag path leading from the fishing village at the top of the cliffs to the shingly shore of a narrow creek resembling the pictures of Norwegian Fiords. In a boat "floated" for the purpose he is pulled out between walls of red granite rock towering upwards to the height of over a hundred feet, and throwing out with contrasted colour the dazzling white plumage of the seagulls. Immediately outside the creek the boat is steered sharply to the left, bringing the visitor face to face with a great arch lifting its roughly Gothic head to the height of some forty or fifty feet between heavy buttresses of nature's building. It is pulled smartly towards the opening—"in oars" being the order as it passes through, with, if necessary, a push by means of a boat-hook set against the walls of the arch-way. It soon emerges into a large oval space, once, probably, a great cave floored with the waters of the ocean, and roofed

with granite, but whose roof has, ages ago, fallen in, or been hammered down by storms, and washed out into deeper water, leaving no roof but the sky. This is known as "The Pot;" and the boiling of the Pot in an east-south-east gale is a thing to be seen in order to be conceived.

A little way south on a rising ground is a farm of no very great extent, known to factor and postman as Path-head, but to the surrounding population as Pothead, whose tenant, when many years ago I came to number him among my flock, was known by his neighbours as "Auld Pottie."

There was no disrespect in the title. No doubt they told with enjoyment, possibly also with humorous exaggeration, tales of his exceeding thrifty ways. They could hardly be said to feel for his independent, self-dependent, and somewhat reserved nature, the affection which they cherished for some of his coevals in the district. But they one and all recognised the sterling character of the man; and some of them knew why he lived a lonely life at Pot-head, with no helpmeet brightening his life with happy companionship, and no young voices making music in his home. All clearly saw, if they did not all follow, the example which he set of a life regulated, not by blind indulgence of appetite and passion, but by intelligent purpose unwaveringly pursued till his working day closed at four score and five years. They could not but perceive that if he who received five talents, and made them other five for his Master, was acclaimed as a good and faithful

servant, George Lendrum took high rank as a good steward for God. They saw the fruitfulness of such a life in the hundred-fold return.

He began in that farm with a capital of about a hundred pounds. Frugality, carefulness, thoughtfulness, and the most rigid economy pervaded the whole homestead inside and out. Some thought he carried economy to excess. But no doubt it was his attention to small expenses—his stopping of the small leaks—that produced his results. He spent nothing on the pomps and vanities. On Sunday and market-day, indeed, he was not conspicuously different from his neighbours. But his week-day working clothes were a sight to behold. I think the crows, who were accustomed to the still, motionless figures in the potato-fields, were seriously puzzled by his life and movement, and were inclined to suspect that the similar figures among the potatoes were shamming, and might some day suddenly move to their detriment.

Yet I was told that at one time he was the "swell" of the parish. No one dressed better. No one rode a better horse, and the stirrup-iron and bit shone like silver. In those days he ruffled it with the best, and was found a partaker in all the social gaieties of the district.

Amidst these his heart succumbed, as did other hearts, to the charms of Margaret Johnstone. No doubt he did his best to secure the jewel. But he failed. She chose another, with whom she lived a long and happy wedded life. Thenceforth

George Lendrum was proof against female charms, and devoted himself to his farm.

By and by he was said to have considerable transactions in grain, and to be making money. But of this no one saw any evidence in larger expenditure on his own personal enjoyments. It was others who got the benefit of his thinking, and planning, and saving. He sought to teach others to better their circumstances, and those of their families, by the same process. He was one of the originators of the Cruden Savings Bank, by means of which, and in which, servants and young people of various classes were induced to save and lay by to the amount of £3000. The Parish Schoolmaster (who was a member of the British Association, and whose name is immortalised in the shell-fish department of Natural History), was Treasurer, and the Clergy and other Directors took their turn to sit with him on the monthly business evening, to receive and pay money. As I sat there in my turn and went about shepherding my flock, I saw many tokens of good results in the independent and purposeful way in which the customers of the bank ordered their lives. They became in their turn among their families and friends missionaries of thoughtfulness and thrift.

George Lendrum not only taught the people of Cruden to help themselves. He saw that in the lives of many there come times of disaster when sickness and death bring the circumstances down very low, and when they are tempted to despair, and to give up the attempt to remain independent.

He saw many at such times on the verge of giving up the struggle and applying to the Parochial Board. He felt that often with a little encouragement and help they would carry on the struggle a little longer, and probably beat the wolf away from the door. So he gave a thousand pounds to form a fund for the help of persons who, through bereavement, sickness, or other cause, were reduced in circumstances, but making a struggle to keep off the pauper's roll. The old Scotch independence, so characteristic of himself, he sought to recognise and encourage in others. But he desired at the same time to teach that the way to independence lay through self-government and thrift. So in this gift the character of the man was indicated, and a lesson administered, by the enactment that indulgence in drink, tobacco, or snuff disqualified a candidate.

He recognised the benefits of education and mental training, and desired to encourage parents in giving them to their children. So he gave four hundred pounds to be a fund for the payment of School Fees for twenty-four poor children.

He enacted, however, that the moment it was not needed, or not appreciated, it was to be applied by the Trustees to another charitable purpose in the parish.

When in his later years his eyesight began to fail, he bethought him of the blind, and gave four hundred pounds to an institution for them.

When the Church of which he was a staunch adherent was seized with the idea of congregational

endowments, and the Church Society undertook, when a congregation had raised £250 for endowment, to add to it a like sum, he at once proposed to give half of the required £250 if the rest of the congregation would make up the other, and the thing was done.

He had the greatest sympathy with clever and ambitious boys struggling upwards through University Education; and about the same time his feelings were moved in behalf of the often poorly left widows of the clergy. There was a sum of £1000 which he had in Railway Debentures, which he resolved not to re-invest, but to give for these two purposes. The one object was easily attained by giving a donation to the Funds of the exceedingly well-managed Scottish Episcopal Friendly Society. But many were the discussions which he and I had about the conditions on which the Bursary at the University was to be obtained and held, and other details. They are connected still in my mind with the production at the close of the sederunt of a curious little square bottle of gin, which suggested thoughts of Flushing and the noted Cruden smuggling lugger the *Crooked Meg*, and questions whether it could be a survival of those days. I never asked who presented him with the ancient liquor.

When the details were settled, and things almost in train, he wished me to notify to the Bishop as President, that he wished to give a portion of the thousand pounds to the Friendly Society. In agreeing to do so, I happened to say that my

brother was going next day to report himself to the Bishop on going up for the University Session, and would carry with him the letter; and that afterwards when it was settled how much was to go to each object, I would gladly write again. At once it occurred to him that by means of my brother a penny was saved, and that if a second letter were avoided it would be the saving of another. So he said, "Well, if I were to consider, I might settle the amount at once," which he did in a few minutes. That is, he watched against and avoided the unnecessary expenditure of twopence on the giving away of a thousand pounds.

He was an example of a true giver. He did not bestow his gifts merely when death in any case parted him and his money. He did not do good by compelling his heirs to do it. He made his benefactions from time to time during his life, and when he died his heirs found that they also had no cause to complain.

His neighbours used to note that in the titles of his benefactions he always provided for the remembrance of his name—the Lendrum Fund, the LendrumSchool Fund, the Lendrum Bursary, and so on. It was not unnatural. There was no other way remaining to perpetuate his name. As has been said, the woman of his choice in the early years of his manhood preferred another, and he never gave his affections elsewhere. Thenceforth he lived a life of self-denial and frugality, making it his happiness to provide moral and material support to them that had need. And certainly as

a bright example of a steward who never wasted his Lord's goods, it was a benefit to others that he should be had in remembrance. In him were exemplified—but in a higher sense than Virgil thought of—the well-known lines:—

Sic vos non vobis nidificatis aves ;
Sic vos non vobis vellera fertis oves ;
Sic vos non vobis mellificatis apes ;
Sic vos non vobis fertis aratra boves.

Not for yourselves, O birds, the nest ye build ;
Not for yourselves, O sheep, the fleece ye bear ;
Not for yourselves, O bees, your comb is filled ;
Not for yourselves, O beeves, ye drag the share.

IX.

"JOHN ANDERSON, MY JO."

For readers beyond the Border the heading of this Vignette should be "Darby and Joan." But my subject belongs to Scotland; therefore I write "John Anderson, my jo." Into the minds of Scottish readers—perhaps of some others also—the words will flash a picture such as I wish to call up before them—of a happy wedded pair in the glow of life's evening; who, lovers in youth, are in old age lovers still; who, having been companions, true and helpful, while they "climbed the hill together," and having been faithful helpers at the top in the noontide hours of life's working day, are happy and helpful companions still, as they gradually descend towards the spot where they look forward to rest side by side at last in the churchyard of St. James's.

> "Noo we maun totter down, John,
> But hand in hand we'll go,
> And sleep thegither at the foot,
> John Anderson, my jo."

There they have rested together (eheu fugaces!) for years now. But well do I remember them. It needs but a moment, and on the magic screen of memory rises the picture of the well-known pew—

number two from the front—where, over the top of the great folio Bible I could see them as I read to them the word of life, and where, Sunday after Sunday, in the dear old church, their voices in earnest devotion mingled with the sound that went up from that congregation like the voice of many waters. It needs but a moment to call up the face of Alexander Young—"Collyhill," as he was called by his neighbours, from the name of his farm—sharply cut and handsome in feature; kindly and at the same time keen and fearless in expression; and with "locks" already, ere I knew him, "like the snow." It needs but a moment to recall the kindly, quiet, restful look on the face of his wife, where all might discern the "ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is, in the sight of God, of great price."

It was a happy day for Alexander Young when Margaret Johnstone consented to join her lot with his till death should part them. Her influence was visible everywhere, and always for good—right to the heart and brain, though unseen, winning its way with extreme gentleness. Hot and choleric he was upon occasion, but the lightest touch of her hand on his arm was like the stilling of the storm. In a moment sweet reasonableness, and, withal, kindliness reigned.

Not only their equals, but their humblest neighbours, felt that at Collyhill they had friends; not of the kind that gives a penny to a beggar to get rid of him, but of the kind that is interested in the well-doing, equally with the well-being of the

humblest around them. They were neither too impatient nor too much occupied with self to listen to the tale of woe, whose burden lost half its weight in the telling to their sympathetic ears. Collyhill's method was that of the Village Preacher of Auburn:—

> Thus to relieve the wretched was his pride,
> And e'en his failings leaned to virtue's side;
> His house was known to all the vagrant train;
> He chid their wanderings, but relieved their pain.

For the voice of Collyhill told always on the side of industry and rectitude. Whoever went there for help was pretty sure to get besides, if needed, a bit of moral stiffening, and to learn that the ideal cherished there was that a Christian "should learn and labour truly to get his own living, and to do his duty in that state of life into which it had pleased God to call him." Meanness and idleness would stand rebuked.

Alexander Young was a true gentleman by nature; nor was his wife one whit behind him. To turn up at Collyhill when friends from far or near were on a visit was to get a lesson in the true essentials of hospitality and friendship.

Like his neighbour, George Lendrum, he bestowed his benefactions during his lifetime. Those to his poorer neighbours were unknown to men, except to the recipients. But there were others which could not so easily be done in secret. When George Lendrum offered to give one-half of the £250 for the Endowment Fund of St.

James's Alexander Young promptly broke the back of the other. A legacy came from the representatives of my predecessor in St. James's to enlarge the choir or chancel of the church, and a great meeting of the congregation was called to decide what was to be done. A good deal more than twice the amount of the legacy was spent, and a great deal more done than the enlargement of the chancel. A large part of it was due to Alexander Young. When many things had been resolved on, he said, "Well, but there's another thing. Some of the seats were made out of the seats of the old church, and some out of the seats of the church before that, and they're of as many colours as Joseph's coat. I think the painter should be got to put that right. If you'll settle to do that, I'll pay half the bill whatever it is."

In such ways he was a powerful help. But he used to do these things in a bashful, apologetic sort of way, as if afraid of taking too much upon him. I well remember one wintry day. I had spent a good part of it among my people at the Bullers of Buchan; but the faithful Kate, who had spent the time pleasantly close at hand in "Fontainbleau's" stable, was now conveying me home. It was a dense moist fog, so thick that it would be really little exaggeration to say that you could see a horse's head emerge out of it before you could tell who was behind him. I saw a horse's head emerge which I thought I recognised; and it turned out to be Collyhill in his gig that he brought after him. We pulled up alongside of

each other. After a few remarks of the usual nature, my friend stammered out in a laborious, bashful, broken sort of way, that he had been up at the Parsonage, and found that I was at the Bullers, so he had come this way to meet me, because he wanted to get a thing off his mind. There were things that he did not want to put in his will, and this was a hundred pounds which he wanted to give to the Endowment Fund of St. James's.

His wife, kindly, observant, and thoughtful, was held by the neighbourhood in universal affection and regard. One of the near neighbours was "Auld Johnnie Barclay," who was now well on the way to his hundredth year, which he finally completed, having been born in 1777—too near the time when "the army swore terribly in Flanders." Johnnie swore terribly sometimes nearer home. Margaret Young one day gently suggested that he should take care of the way he spoke, and not swear, because it was a bad thing, and the children about the doors would learn it from him. "Swear!" answered Johnnie indignantly; "D—n it, no; that's a thing I never do." So little did he mean by it, that he was not even aware that he habitually did it.

Somehow all who came in contact with Alexander Young instinctively felt that while he was as much as any one in full harmony with the friendliness and geniality of all social gatherings, anything out of harmony with high principle and gentlemanly feeling was entirely out of place in his presence.

It was ashamed to show its unlovely face. If I cherish his memory, it is not only because he was a strong helper to me in my work, but because his character was a tower of strength to the congregation, and laid fast hold of the affection of his friends. Such a man—such a wedded pair—are a spring of healthy and good influence, and therefore a treasure to a neighbourhood. Even their memory is a power.

> "When the stream
> That overflowed the soul was passed away,
> A consciousness remained that it had left,
> Deposited upon the silent shore
> Of memory, images and precious thoughts
> That shall not die and cannot be destroyed."

R. Brown, Phot., Inverurie.

VIEW IN THE VALLEY OF THE DON, embracing Pohar Chapel, The Missie's School, and the homes of "The Laird," "The Auld Man," and Auld Widow Maitland—Bennachie in the distance.

X.

THE MISSIE'S SCHOOL.

It was not in "Sweet Auburn, loveliest village of the plain." There was, in fact, no village at all. It was in a lovely rural district, studded with the homesteads of not very large farms, and diversified by many woods covering rocky steeps where the plough could not go. Fields and woods sloped with varying declivity towards the river in the bottom of the winding valley, or towards the burn which paid to the river its constant tribute.

In one direction the eye lighted on the ploughman plodding steadily from end to end of the field behind his cloud-breathing horses; whistling for his own delectation, or speaking words of direction to his team, and followed by the equally plodding serious rook in search of the evicted worm. In another direction it was caught by the group of cattle of various colours grazing together, or lying in peaceful enjoyment chewing the cud. The lapwing swooped over the field with strident wing, and frequent cry of "Peesweep," and the lark soared singing towards the sunny heavens. On

dykeside footpath in various directions was to be seen the schoolboy,

> "With shining morning face creeping like snail
> Unwillingly to school."

But he was not whining like Shakespeare's schoolboy. He was enjoying to the full the fresh smell of brown earth and green field, the warm sunshine, and the voices of all animated nature. He was very young, and his school-books were few. Possibly he had a small home-made satchel. But if you had seen him any time between harvest and the succeeding summer he had something else, which was one of the few things which Shakespeare apparently did not know. He had his peat, to keep the school fire going. At least he had when "The Missie's School" was opened over fifty years ago. Before long, however, his father discovered that he could make much surer of the fuel reaching the school by sending a cart-load when he brought home his own. This arrangement had other advantages. It prevented wasteful war; for the boys could not "clod" one another with fragments from the diminishing peat on the way to the temple of learning. No doubt the boy occasionally missed his ammunition; but he was also relieved of an irksome load, and found abundant compensation in the consequent freedom.

You would hardly have divined the destination of the juveniles, for there was no building visible at all like a school. They were converging towards a farm-house, rather better than the usual run, for

it was two stories high, and inhabited by four different sets of people, each with a room and small bedroom. The male inhabitants were employed all day in the fields or woods; the women and children were all day at home.

They did not always agree—gossip being the usual cause of the wordy strife. One of the wives was as good as a local newspaper—in fact was nicknamed "The Creek-o'-Don Chronicle." The mixture of truth and fiction was not unlike that of many modern newspapers, and was even cheaper than the halfpenny newspaper of the present day.

The one person who was never involved in the wars was "The Missie." She "wore the white flower of a blameless life," and lived that life apart from the others. The title she was known by was a distinction. Very few outside of the laird's family got any such title. She and her silent sister lived together in their room and little bedroom, and the sister was constantly occupied sewing.

Nature had not made either of them beautiful; and "The Missie's" face had been scarred and blanched by small-pox. But two more estimable, pious women never lived.

In the many homesteads and cottages visible from their door was a considerable number of youngsters, arrived and arriving at the full use of their vigorous legs, and no less vigorous independent wills. It was time that their education should be begun. But the schools of the nearest town were too far away for their present powers

and geographical knowledge. The parent would endeavour to teach the child the alphabet as well as the Lord's Prayer; but amid the increasing labours of household and field, and the arrival every year or two of an additional baby, the work was very desultory.

At last some one thought of "The Missie." No doubt she willingly obeyed the call to do some good, and add a little to her scanty income. At any rate these youngsters were in due course collected into "The Missie's" parlour, where they continued to gather daily at ten to pursue their education.

Goldsmith says of the schoolmaster of Auburn,

"A man severe he was and stern to view."

"The Missie" could hardly be called severe or stern; but she was certainly serious. I doubt whether she ever got the dimmest glimpse of a joke in her life. In our childhood we used to be told not to make faces, lest the wind should change and cause them to remain fixed in an everlasting grimace. The wind must have changed while "The Missie" was in church on a fast day.

She set to work in all seriousness to do her best. Her scholars were young; but in due course they learned to read after their fashion. If you had passed the window you might have heard a sentence of the New Testament or "The Collection" intoned *staccato* in a loud and strident monotone, rising high above the murmur of irrepressible movement and of other children learning their

spellings. At another time you might have heard afar off the whole school chanting in ear-splitting chorus—

"Twice one are two,
Twice two are four,"

and so on through the whole multiplication table. In this case, however, it was not absolute monotone, but something between that and a Gregorian chant. It was the same with *Watts' Hymns*. Some of these, probably in consequence of certain remarks at home, were felt to be somewhat personal. In reciting them the scholars felt very much like victims on the rack, tortured into condemning themselves.

"Let dogs delight to bark and bite
For God hath made them so;
Let bears and lions growl and fight,
For 'tis their nature too.
But, children, you should never let
Your angry passions rise;
Your little hands were never made
To tear each other's eyes."

The next hymn was equally pointed; and the serious face of "The Missie" made them feel as if she knew them to be personally guilty.

"Birds in their little nests agree;
And 'tis a shameful sight
When children of one family
Fall out and chide and fight."

Another that was felt to be personal began—

"How doth the little busy bee
Improve each shining hour."

It contained the aphorism—

> "Satan finds some mischief still
> For idle hands to do."

Very true, no doubt. But Dr Watts would have been forgiven if he had never written it; because the quotation of it at home was the sure prelude by parental authority to the imposition of some irksome labour, which cut short much appreciated amusement. In fact half the trouble arose from these hymns being as well known at home as at school. And it was these personal ones that were most frequently quoted—always appropriately.

> "'Tis the voice of the sluggard ; I hear him complain,
> You have waked me too soon, I must slumber again."

was like a *réveillée* in the morning.

"The Missie" was quite equal to fixing these, and other more delightful pieces from the "Collection" in our memories, as well as the Catechism and the facts of New Testament history. In the Old Testament especially, the proper names, it must be confessed, were distinct difficulties, and were often treated as more critical difficulties sometimes are in the present day—we "looked them in the face and passed on." We found out that we had a very good chance to escape without being turned back. But occasionally in the "Collection," we ran up against a word which stopped us as effectually as a ten-foot wall. The word had no capital letter: it could not be a proper name. We should certainly have been turned back if we had looked it in the face and passed on. So there

ensued a dead pause. "Spell the word," "The Missie" would say. "H-i-p-p-o-p-o-t-a-m-u-s." "'Highpotaymus,' you stupid boy; go on." The stupid boy would get over the "highpotaymus" with a jolt, and pursue the chase towards the next obstacle.

But she had worse difficulties than these; the worst arising from the active effects of original sin in her scholars. I do not believe she ever heard of the foreign proverb to the effect that "whom the gods hate they make schoolmasters;" but I am sure there were times when she could have entered into the feeling. If you could have looked in at the window, you would have seen the scholars, book or slate in hand, sitting on parallel forms facing the light, with perhaps one boy standing on the form, a monument of evil-doing, and another in the corner with his back towards everybody else, and his face within a few inches of the closed door. The forms had neither backs behind nor desk in front. We were supposed to have backbones strong enough to do without external support.

"The Missie" possessed a tawse about an inch broad, the business end being divided into four fingers. Its office was no sinecure. In persistence in mischief, or rather in amusement and fun, some scholars showed too much backbone. One boy required an application of the tawse nearly every day he went to school. Along with a companion in mischief, he was one day kept in to be dealt with at leisure after the rest had gone. "The Missie" began upon him. Right and left hand

had to be held up turn about to receive the lash of the tawse, and the castigation went "bonnily" on. He was not going to show himself a soft one, and lash after lash was received with a look of unflinching indifference. But after some time his hands began to smart so that he could no longer keep the tears from appearing in his eyes. "The Missie" was now satisfied, and turned to his companion. The victim just released wondered how his friend was going to take his punishment, and looked sideways out of the corner of his eye to see. As each blow came down he saw Jamie's eyes wink, and his lip pout forward, and his head jerk backwards, and his hand jerk inwards with a flinching movement, and was so tickled that in spite of all he could do he burst into an uncontrollable snigger, which, with great presence of mind, he attempted to convert into something like the sound of weeping. But he had poor success. "The Missie" looked at him, and pronounced his name with blood-curdling solemnity and surprise, and sent him home without another word. Truly we can feel for "The Missie."

This particular boy had far less self-control over his amusement-loving inclinations than he showed in the bearing of his punishment. The very next day, after the mid-day play-hour, he was sauntering up the brae for the afternoon innings of the school. He was in no hurry. It was a lovely sunny day, and there were a thousand things to see and hear, which filled him with pleasure. His eye fell upon a peculiarly robust earwig crawling

across the path. A clerical poet (J. T. F. Farquhar) has described the creature in a "Didactic Poem" preserved entire in Edwards' *Modern Scottish Poets*.

> "The horny golloch's an awsome beast,
> Souple and scaly;
> He has twa nippers, and a hantle o' feet,
> And a forky taily."

Every one knows how the sight of him would affect any of the fair sex. On this boy the effect was not at all the same. He had little dread of any living creature, biped, quadruped, or even centipede. He was seized with a desire for a closer inspection of the "horny golloch." But there was no time to wait. He would, therefore, take him with him, and inspect him in school. So he seized him by the "forky taily," and carried him off. He was late, and, hastening to his place, took his slate for his sums. He appeared to become at once intent on his arithmetic, making up for lost time. But the fact was that he was intent on the "horny golloch," whom he had released on his slate, and found to behave very curiously. He found that when he put his finger in his mouth and drew a wet mark round the creature on the slate, the "golloch" was "parked"—he would not cross the wet mark. His neighbours on either side were as much interested as he was. So intent was he on making sure of this curious fact in natural history, that he never noticed that "The Missie" had left her chair and arrived behind him. A slight rustle reached his ear, and he

looked round just in time to receive on his nose the box that was meant for his ear, and with which he was sent to study the door with his back towards the school. Arrived there, he found that his nose was bleeding. That was really nothing, for it had often been bled in a similar way by other hands before. But he was angered that she had got so near him without being detected. He was, moreover, insulted above measure by having his nose bled by the hand of a woman, and proceeded to behave like the bad boy he was. The blood that came from his nose (of which "The Missie" was unaware) he transferred to the door with his finger, and spread on the floor with his foot, and suffered to drip on his clothes to stir the feeling of his mother when he went home. He calculated that he would bring a hornet's nest about "The Missie's" ears. And he did create a commotion in the maternal breast. But he miscalculated for all that. The matter had a most unexpected effect on the mind of his father, who invited him into retirement. I fancy there was investigation, and then action. At any rate when he re-appeared in public his humiliation was visible to the naked eye; and his father's words as he followed him were, "Noo, man, after this, every time ye get a lickin' frae 'The Missie' at the school, ye'll get anither frae me o' the same breed as this when ye come hame." Whatever that boy thought, we unhesitatingly say that his father served him right, and set a good example to other fathers.

The result was a good deal more self-recollection

on the part of that boy till soon afterwards he was made to trudge to a more distant school, where there was a tawse three times as broad, and a masculine arm to lay it on. Its hardness he was at some pains to avoid experiencing.

"The Missie's School" continued to do its preparatory work for many years—a happier time, it is to be feared, to her scholars than to her.

It was by no means a useless institution. It might, indeed, be said to be connected with the University. It could hardly be said to be *affiliated*, because the Sacrist of the University was only "The Missie's" uncle. But we looked with great respect on the spare figure and shrewd, kindly face of the broadcloth-encased, tall-hatted representative of King's College, when every summer he paid a visit to his nieces. And when in after years John received us in the quadrangle at the end of the College vacation with his beaming welcome "Come awa', my bonnie laddies; hoo hae ye been this lang time?" we felt as if he unified our educational career.

May both "The Missie" and he be for ever happy!

XI.

"O SWEET CONTENT!"

ENGLISH poets have written many fine things about contentment. These same things are not only, generally speaking, very beautiful, but also curiously various.

All put it on a very high pedestal indeed. Says one—

> "O calm, rich, hushed content,
> Is there in being blessedness without thee?"

But when, in the first epistle of his *Moral Essays*, Pope discusses human blessedness, beginning—

> "O happiness! our being's end and aim,"

and goes on to ask how and where it is to be found, and to enumerate the various answers given to these questions, he says—

> "Some place the bliss in action, some in ease,
> Those call it pleasure, and contentment these."

Here action and ease seem to be placed in antithesis, and contentment connected with that which is the antithesis of action. But another poet makes it the spur of action and the object of desire—

> "How man's desire
> Pursues contentment! 'Tis the soul of action,
> And the propounded reason of our life."

If, however, one poet seems to make contentment the satisfaction of desire, Shakespeare, the greatest of them all, who looked human nature through and through, teaches that desire may be attained without contentment—

> "Nought's had, all's spent,
> When our desire is got without content."

But the most delicious thing dealing with content, entitled "The Happy Heart," written by the old poet Thomas Dekker, who died little more than twenty years after Shakespeare, is far from seeing any incompatibility between action in its most vigorous form and contentment. I think my reader will not find fault with me for quoting the whole.

"Art thou poor, yet hast thou golden slumbers?
O sweet content!
Art thou rich, yet is thy mind perplexèd?
O punishment!
Dost thou laugh to see how fools are vexèd
To add to golden numbers golden numbers?
O sweet content! O sweet, O sweet content!
Work apace, apace, apace, apace;
Honest labour bears a lovely face;
Then hey nonny nonny, hey nonny nonny.

"Canst drink the waters of the crispèd spring?
O sweet content!
Swimm'st thou in wealth, yet sink'st in thine own tears?
O punishment!
Then he that patiently want's burden bears
No burden bears, but is a King, a King!
O sweet content, O sweet, O sweet content!
Work apace, apace, apace, apace;
Honest labour bears a lovely face;
Then hey nonny nonny, hey nonny nonny!"

I wonder whether it is because it was then more frequently seen, that the old poets have so much to say about it. Lady Elizabeth Carew, who was a contemporary of Shakespeare, seems to have noted it often, and among the less richly endowed in worldly goods.

> "Yet oft we see that some in humble state
> Are cheerful, pleasant, happy and content;
> When those indeed that are of higher fate,
> With vain additions do their thoughts torment."

The idea of contentment is inseparably connected in my mind with a picture vignetted on the sensitive plate of memory in the days of early boyhood. The name underneath is

"Auld Widow Maitland,"

whose home was a few hundred yards from mine, near Manar, Aberdeenshire.

The narrow cart-track which led us from the public road to her dwelling was separated from her "kail-yard" by a "fail-dyke," well overgrown with whins, and terminating in a considerable clump of the broad-leaved plant known thereabouts by the classical name of *tussilago*. On the way to the door we passed the byre, which sheltered her staid, and mild-eyed, and equally contented cow. Before reaching the door we could hardly fail to notice near it the fragrant costmary and southernwood, and, a little further on, the peat-stack. The dwelling was of the humblest,—in fact too humble to survive her very long. The roods of masonry in the wall were few, and the quantity

of thatch on the roof was great, and wore a look of age, while there was "grass growing on the house-top," and here and there a yellow patch of stone-crop. The chimney consisted of a small barrel, whipped round with straw-rope, and, of course, minus the two ends. The windows were very small, and a moderately tall person would have to stoop to get safely in through the door. Looking "ben," he would see no grate, but the peat-fire on the hearthstone against the gable-wall, from which the light-coloured smoke wavered and curled upwards towards a white-washed wooden hood, connected, like the wide end of a funnel, with the chimney above. Through this funnel, at the corner of which the "auld eelie lamp" or "cruisie" hung on a nail, the smoke passed out, unless the wind was in "the reeky airt." In that unlucky case there would be "a flan," or blow-down, and the atmosphere would become so thick with smoke and "motes" as to cause almost any visitor's eyes to smart. But on such days the visitors would be rare, and Auld Widow Maitland would suffer it with no companions but her daughter Jean (who might with truth have been called "auld" too) and the cat, whose nose and eyes being nearer the floor enabled her to get off with the least suffering of the three.

But the one of the three who was sure to rivet the visitor's attention was Auld Widow Maitland herself. She sat in a big chair on the north side of the fireplace, with a small window in the gable at her right hand, in the recess of which, being

three-fourths of the thickness of the wall in depth, lay her spectacles, her Bible, one or two other books, a thimble, a pincushion, a reel of sewing cotton, and some other little things, all within reach of her hand. Behind her, in the angle between the gable and the north wall, was fixed an "aumbry" of triangular ground plan, coloured a rich dark brown by the smoke. There she sat diligently knitting stockings of a blueish colour, the proceeds of which, with those of her daughter Jean's work, formed no unimportant portion of their living. She wore the old-fashioned "close mutch" on her venerable grey head; a grey knitted "shawlie" on her bent shoulders; a very broad apron, almost covering her wincey gown in front; and an immense pocket hung outside her dress on the right-hand side by means of a string tied round her waist. Old age had written its sign-manual all over her longish, once oval, now slightly angular face. She had been long a sojourner in this world, and was in touch with it still. She was interested in all her neighbours—in their joys and sorrows alike, entering into both, being as capable of quiet mirth as of gentle, tearful sympathy. In her neighbours' children particularly she had a most kindly and sympathetic interest, felt both by children and parents. And what the children instinctively felt was that she comprehended them, and could see things from their point of view, and understand their ideas. Her intercourse with them was consequently delightful to them, and, I have no doubt, extremely diverting to herself.

But in living touch though she was felt to be with this world in which she was living like the rest of us, she was at the same time felt, not only by grown-up people, but even by the young, to be in no less living touch with an unseen world behind it. It was not that she obtruded it in the least; but you could no more miss it than you could miss the expression of her face. That expression might have been the model from which Lady Elizabeth Carew's picture was drawn—it was "cheerful, pleasant, happy, and content." The merest glance round would show that she had reached content, not through ease, but in the midst of diligent work; not by obtaining her desires, but by restraining them. In fact we might reverse Shakespeare's words, and find her an illustration of them so reversed.

"All's had, nought's spent,
When our desires are lost, but not content."

The unseen world was not obtruded in her talk, though she now and then spoke a serious word to us; but somehow we felt that to her it was very near, and the most real of all realities.

We sometimes heard in the conversation of our elders things *about* her, probably divulged by her daughter Jean (who was of a fibre not nearly so fine), which confirmed the impression. For instance, she had many of the Psalms by heart, and when she awoke during the night, and could not go to sleep again, her remedy was to say the hundred and nineteenth. It was said that she was always asleep before it was finished. I think we

felt her "calm, rich, hushed content;" but not having yet arrived at the analytical or critical age, especially in these matters, did not trouble our heads about its origin or foundation. But, looking back over the years, I think I know what that foundation was. To her, God was the reality of realities, supreme in majesty and holiness, but supreme also in love. I am sure she had no doubt that, humble and unworthy as she was, He "numbered the very hairs of her head." She was as sure as she was of anything that He who "careth for the sparrows," and "feedeth the young ravens that call upon Him," had the loving, protecting arms of His providence around her. Consequently no calamity disturbed her quiet content; it was her tender Father doing her some good.

When writing *Auld Robin Gray*, Lady Anne Barnard had heaped on her heroine every calamity she could think of—sent her lover to sea and wrecked his ship, broken her father's arm, smitten her mother with illness—and was wondering how she could make the calamities still more overwhelmingly crushing. "Steal the cow, Sister Anne," said one of the family. It was promptly done.

> "He hadna been gane a twelvemonth and a day,
> When my father broke his arm, and the cow was stown away," etc.

But actuality was to Widow Maitland still more cruel than imagination had been to Jeanie—it killed the cow.

Young as I was,—perhaps *because* I was young,

—I have never forgotten the impression produced by the way she bore herself under this, from a worldly point of view, crushing stroke. She was still "cheerful, pleasant, happy, and content." I think now that it was her absolute trust in God that was the foundation of her "sweet content." She had had a positive affection for her cow, and mourned the kindly beast dead and gone; but that was all. Her content was still "calm," and still "rich." She was an illustration of the fine Scotch proverb—"Hae God, hae a'." And she knew Him to be alive for evermore. I think she knew how to attain contentment better than many poets and philosophers. Gay came nearer the mark than some of them when he wrote:—

> "'Tis not to any rank confined,
> But dwells in every honest mind;
> Be justice then your sole pursuit;
> Plant virtue, and content's the fruit."

But Auld Widow Maitland went deeper. She founded her contentment not on a quality of man, but on the attributes of God.

There was not an atom of aggressiveness in her womanly nature. She did not set herself to be a teacher. It was what she *was* that taught. She was an unconscious teacher of the highest kind. Changing "deed" into "soul," Shakespeare's words apply:—

> "How far that little candle throws his beams!
> So shines a good soul in a naughty world."

Her years in this world had been many. Of her earlier life we knew nothing. But when we came

to know her it was evident that while her connexion with this world was getting steadily feebler, the roots of her being,—her spiritual nature,—were striking deeper, and consciously deeper, into the spiritual world beyond. The parting of the last feeble link to earth would scarcely be felt, and when "the day" came her spiritual and spiritualised being, long rooted in its native soil, would burst into full bloom under the sky of heaven.

Even so it came to pass. One morning she rose exactly as she had done for so many years, and in her accustomed place read her morning portion of God's Word, and prayed her morning prayer. Thereafter her daughter Jean placed the little tray with her breakfast on her lap as she sat in her big chair, and then turned to mend the fire. She had seen her mother lift up her hand to invoke the Father's blessing with the children's bread. Hearing no words, Jean turned her head, and saw the aged hand sink down on the tray and lie still. Her mother had gone to Paradise.

XII.

THE OLD DOCTOR.

To me he was never anything but "The Old Doctor." By the time I knew him his career in active practice was nearly at an end. He had taken a younger man as partner, to whom ere long he relinquished the practice, and retired to enjoy what rest might remain to a man of over seventy. But to the affections of the whole parish—indeed of several parishes—he remained to the end "The Old Doctor," respected and trusted by all classes from the highest to the lowest. Byron says:—

> "Physicians mend or end us
> *Secundum artem;* but although we sneer
> In health—when sick we call them to attend us
> Without the least propensity to jeer."

In the case of the Old Doctor, the parish sick or healthy—it was all the same—had no propensity to jeer.

He had practised among them for a whole generation. He had brought a great proportion of them into the world; and had kept many of them in it when they were afraid their summons had come to leave it. Whether this was a blessing to

them or not, they thought it was, and regarded the Old Doctor as a benefactor.

I can recall him to my memory's eye to this day. I can see the bald head, and white remnant of his hair; his eager eye and continually moving lips; his active, alert, bustling manner, which said as plainly as manner could that he had no time to lose about anything.

That is what you would see when introduced. And when he shook hands with you, you would be *sure* he had no time to lose at that moment in particular, for before you knew where you were you would get the warm grip, and your hand would be dropped as if his had been suddenly required to stop a bleeding artery.

He *never* had any time to lose. He could enjoy a rubber at whist with his friends in the evening after the day's work was done; but while it was a-doing he laboured with all his might.

He was once called to see an old fisherman, a friend of his and mine, whose memory I cherish. One or two pointed questions were all that the Doctor required to satisfy him as to what needed to be done. But his friend had a great many (no doubt irrelevant) sensations, which he insisted on detailing to the Doctor at great length. The Doctor was impatient to be off to the next sick-bed—I may at once admit that patience was not one of his most conspicuous virtues—and, after fidgetting for a moment, abruptly interrupted his friend, saying, "Oh, man, I ken a' about it as

weel's if I had gane through ye wi' a lichtit can'le."

The people stood cheerfully all his abruptness and impatience, because they knew that there never was a physician more careful in diagnosing his cases, or more watchful and attentive till they required him no more. They knew also that for the benefit of his great experience and medical knowledge he laid it on very gently in the bill. He had a strong sense of the difference between a clinical lecturer and a practising physician. It irritated him if a patient wanted to know all the pathology, etc., of his disease. The moment he was asked what was the matter, he would answer sharply, "I'm paid to cure ye, and not to tell ye what's the matter wi' ye."

Some, no doubt, were disappointed at being thus unceremoniously cut short, because it prevented them from occupying in turn the room of the learned, and giving the lecture second hand to their neighbours. But they forgave him even this, because they were perfectly certain he would tell no one else anything. People soon found that it did not pay to ask him. For let any one, even the wife of his bosom ask him, "What's the matter with So-and-So?" he would answer, sometimes in a tone suggestive of asperity, "I canna tell ye, for nineteen reasons: in the first place, I don't know."

A neighbouring practitioner, who had a pleasant wit of his own, was exactly of the same mind about being "pumped" regarding his patients. One day a neighbour attempted to do this with re-

gard to a much respected common friend, but the doctor was one too many for him. He kept him in play till they got to the door of the sick man's house, when he rang the bell, and saying, "The servant 'll be here in a minute: ask her," dived swiftly round the corner.

The patience of a country doctor is often sorely tried. People will sometimes refrain from taking a hand from hoeing turnips during the working hours, to send for him. They will take it quite coolly for a whole day, and then in the evening when the doctor is settling down to his much-needed rest, their messenger will arrive to drag him and his horse out again for perhaps a good few weary miles. They will not send for him on Saturday; but on Sunday, when he is thinking of going to join in the public worship of his Maker, a messenger on his way to church will bring an urgent call for his professional services far enough away from it. They will ask his advice, and then doctor themselves with some nostrum which they have heard of elsewhere. A famous country practitioner well known to the Old Doctor once went to visit an old woman who was for the time being a patient of his through some not very serious ailment. When he opened the door, he could not see the patient for smoke. But as he advanced the old woman discovered who her visitor was, and exclaimed, "Oh I'm nae needin' ye noo, Doctor: I'm nae needin' ye noo. I've gotten Holloway's Ointment, that cure's a'thing!" "Weel," was the swift retort, "Foo [why] dinna ye rub the lum [chimney] wi't?"

The Old Doctor moved about among his patients in storm as well as in sunshine. Many were the stormy days and nights to the fury of which he exposed himself for their benefit. But he never alluded to it. Though I can well believe that bad weather did not increase his patience, I never heard of him alluding to it as the famous country practitioner already mentioned once did. In obedience to summons he drove weary miles through bitter wind and rain to a place near the foot of Ben-na-chie. He found the sick man in a state of great alarm. "Am I gaun to dee, Doctor?" he said: "Am I gaun to dee?" "Never a fear o' ye deein': it's ower coorse a nicht for the Deil to come for ye."

The Old Doctor received many and valuable tokens of appreciation from the district, which were objects of great pride; but I am perfectly sure that in doing his work he never thought of reward.

No one appreciated more the good feeling of his neighbours. It was a great happiness to him. But his natural impatience sometimes made it hard for him to endure its expression. On one occasion he had been absent from church some Sundays through illness. Of course he was missed, and the cause soon known. On the first Sunday of his reappearance, on coming out at the church door he was beset by many inquiring friends, "Did your stamack keep up weel, Doctor?" asked one earnestly. "Oh, man," answered the Doctor, "I could hae digested horse nails a' the time."

There was a robust uprightness and honesty

about the old man which won universal respect. He was incapable of pretence. There was not a particle of nauseous namby-pamby-ness in his whole moral outfit. If people sometimes felt his pepperiness, they always admired his pluck. He was a piece of sound metal all through.

As he went down the hill into the valley, it troubled him that in his busy life religion had not had the place which he now felt it ought to have had. He could not assure himself that he was entitled to any comfort from the adage, "*Orat qui laborat.*" But when he was made to realise how he would himself have received a penitent son, acknowledging his faults, and confessing that his father had been all along right and himself wrong, it came home to him that he might trust the perfect Father who had given His only begotten to die for him, to deal lovingly even with him. In faith in that love he rests beneath the shadow of the Cross in the wind-swept Churchyard within view of the sea on which he looked in sunshine and storm for so many years. May he sleep well!

Photo by J. Shivas, Peterhead.

ST. JAMES'S, CRUDEN.

XIII.

SANDY DAVIDSON.

Hear us, O Lord, aloud we pray!
Nor let our sun go down at noon;
Thy years are an eternal day,
Why should Thy children die so soon?

How many lives, rich in early promise, but all too brief for the ripe accomplishment, bring these lines to remembrance!

Sandy Davidson occupied no lofty position in the social scale. The state of life into which it pleased God to call him was a humble one—"far from the madding crowd." But it was God's choice for him; and with purpose so single-minded and unflinching did he learn and labour and do his duty in it—a stimulating example to all his fellows—that the thought of him, if it does not justify, can at least hardly fail to suggest the question—

"Why should Thy servant die so soon?"

His father occupied a small holding on a hillside in Cruden. In his household conventionality was a thing unknown. Even if it had been known, it would possibly have been despised. Whatever

was said or done was said or done for some conscious and distinct—probably also sensible—reason. His fire-side was not a place

> Where nature's end of language was declined,
> And men talked only to conceal the mind.

Language was used, not to conceal either thought or the lack of it, but to express in the most natural words the feeling or judgment of the moment.

It was not the abode of luxury. "The frivolous work of polished idleness" was there unknown.

> From toil they won their spirits light,
> From busy day, the peaceful night;
> Rich, from the very want of wealth,
> In heaven's best treasures, peace and health.

Labour was their calling and their duty, and, Sunday or Saturday, duty was a sacred thing. On the Lord's day it took a great deal to keep the old man from his place in the Lord's house. Tooth-ache could not do it; though the way in which his head was swathed in flannel with sundry ear-like corners projecting here and there, had a somewhat disturbing effect on the younger worshippers. Mere pain was nothing: his legs were not disabled, and had therefore to carry him to his accustomed place.

The same unflinching spirit animated him on the working days of the week. Something would be seriously wrong if he were seen falling to the rear.

When I first knew Sandy, who was the younger son, he was a tall and somewhat awkward lad of

about fourteen. The thing that drew attention to him was the utter unconventionality of all his ways. At first even his way of shaking hands was his own; but at the same time he eagerly read every book in the congregational library, and it required very little conversation to discover that he read to good purpose. He was not like those of his contemporaries who lived as if they believed that "thought would destroy their Paradise." His mind was of the ruminating order: he thought of what he read. To the careless eye he might seem alone as he performed some humble work in the fields. But as Sir Philip Sidney would have said, "he was never alone," being "accompanied with noble thoughts."

In this way he grew up,—I may say went on growing up,—till he was six feet four high, with a head that would have looked small and insignificant but for his large and expressive eyes, which manifestly saw and deliberately appraised everything.

He was a contrast strong and forcible to many of his coevals, who had far more external smartness and polish, but in solid mental power, common sense, thoughtfulness and knowledge, were nowhere at all in comparison. Some of them were inclined to laugh at his unconventionalities, unobservant of the fact that, though as yet uncut and unpolished, he was a diamond which they could never equal in intrinsic value. But they occasionally became conscious of a kind of mental faintness, when by some unexpected flash of satire he smote them with irre-

sistible effect. The wan kind of smile with which they looked at him on these occasions in silent helplessness was a picture. In spite of this, however, they continued to regard him with a superior air; for which Sandy cared not one single straw. Simplicity and fearlessness belonged to his nature, and he had the exact measure of his critics. When he was convinced of the rectitude of any opinion or course, he was immovable. To the jeers and laughter of all the fools in creation he would not have yielded one hair's-breadth; and the said fools knew well what would happen to them if they tried him with argument.

When he went to service the value of this characteristic was clearly recognised. No employer was ever afraid that Sandy would be talked over or led away by companions.

It was soon perceived on all hands by the observant that while he enjoyed life as much as any one, he was not a votary of pleasure but of principle, and believed that duty well done gave the greatest enjoyment to life. It became clear also that he was working on a distinct and deliberately chosen plan. He had formed the conception of a home of his own where he could work out his principles in family life. He adopted no miserly ways, evidently holding, with the Scotch proverb, that "the groat's ill-saved that shames its master." On the other hand, however, he wasted no money on unproductive amusement, but saved it to realise his ideal of life. Even those who had been in the way of regarding him as an oddity came to feel that

such a view had lost all point, when they saw his name, while yet a farm-servant, in the list of shareholders of the Town and County Bank.

But even the pursuit of his ideal, and affection for her with whom the picture was associated, never caused the balance so much as to vibrate when what he recognised as a prior claim was in the other scale. On one occasion his father was disabled by illness, and could not work his little farm. Sandy was in a good situation, where he could save the greater part of his wages; but, believing that his father was unable to pay a stranger to do the work which he could no longer do himself, he put everything aside for what he believed to be his duty to his parent, and came home to work the place, expecting no reward but his food. After a few months, however, he discovered by the arrival of interest warrants that his father had money saved, and was quite able to deal with the situation without sacrificing him. He had come home because his elder brother, being a married man with a family, could not. To come to the rescue of his father was one thing; to increase his brother's possible inheritance at the expense of his own ideal was another. The one was a sacred duty, which he had promptly taken up without a word; the other did not present the same sort of call.

Before long, however, the matter was happily put right by his father's recovery, and his own return to the working out of his ideal; hardly any one all the while knowing or recognising that

Sandy's moral fibre had passed through a severe test, and come out triumphant.

His employers always respected him. They could hardly fail to be amused occasionally by his original views and quaint expression of them; and now and then would say something, generally in a bantering way, for the very purpose of drawing these out. The chaff, of course, as usual among the agricultural class, was pretty broad in character. Sandy was as little like "a ladies' man" as could well be imagined. Hence the humour of a sally by a former employer who saw him one evening approaching his old quarters: — "Hullo, Sandy! are ye come back to see the lasses?" "I'll warrant they'll maybe be thinkin' that," was the prompt response. Who knows? Perhaps they were; but for that reason took all the greater care not to tell. Often, however, it was the questioner who found his question so skilfully turned as to come back on himself like an ill-thrown boomerang. In no case, nevertheless, was there anything to rankle; and I do not believe that Sandy had an enemy in the world.

Accordingly no envious feelings were stirred when it became evident that he was soon to realise his object. It was felt by all that he deserved success. He rented a farm not far from his native fields, and within reach of the church where he had worshipped from childhood. His arrangements were made with his usual thoughtfulness and care, and everything was ready for entering into possession, and crowning all by bringing home his bride.

No doubt his imagination, as he went about his work, was busy with the future,—with the one sweet spot on earth, his home to be, and the star of his hearth soon to be shedding her mild influence there. The prospect was bright and hopeful: within the circle of the horizon around the happy pair there was no visible cloud. Sandy went about his work as usual, fulfilling the days till "the term" should set him free, and the happy climax come, when "he was not, for God took him,"—so suddenly that, without even the instinctive lifting of the hand, in the middle of a step, his body sunk to the ground and was dead,—his spirit gone beyond recall.

The clergy have many a sad office to perform, calling for more than ordinary tenderness and tact. But no sadder or harder can be imagined than that which fell to my successor in Cruden, when he had to communicate to her who was so soon to have been a bride that the desire of her eyes was gone—his voice silent for ever, and the bright look of tender recognition gone from the dull cold eye of death.

Sandy Davidson's career had been brief; but not too brief to leave an example capable of furnishing inspiration and stimulus wherever known. One could only regret that he was not permitted to carry on that example through another stage and condition of life. But such is the lot of man:

> "Leaves have their time to fall,
> And flowers to wither at the north wind's breath,

And stars to set;—but all,
Thou hast all seasons for thine own, O Death!"

And old Samuel Johnson may point the lesson:—

"Catch, then, O catch the transient hour;
Improve each moment as it flies;
Life's a short summer—man a flower—
He dies—alas! how soon he dies!"

XIV.

"THE 'PISKIES' SCHOOL."

O Life! how pleasant is thy morning,
Young Fancy's rays the hills adorning,
Cold-pausing Caution's lesson scorning,
We frisk away,
Like school-boys at th' expected warning,
To joy and play.

SUCH was the picture which rose before the retrospective eye of Burns, when memory

"ran back and fetched the age of gold,"

the school-boy age of youth and budding power, when neither past nor future weighed upon the mind, but on the face of the present, bright with joy and health, brooded the spirit of aspiration and hope. Such, I imagine, is the picture to most of us.

I seem to see again the two miles of hill-side road, winding more or less parallel to the river, but a good way above it, with view and vista changing at every turn; fringed with whin, and broom, and thorn, wild-rose bramble and rasp-berry; and with wayside pools alive with tadpole and newt, water-beetle and caddis-worm, and with many another swimming and creeping thing, with ways better

known than its name. I seem to feel the warm, bright sun in the sky, in which I rejoice no less fully than the grass-hopper that chirps on the sunny bank as I pass. I hear the rich, full song of the thrush in the wooded bank that slopes down to the river; I listen to the cheery, energetic song of the chaffinch; to the contented refrain of the confiding yorling; and to the full, sustained worship of the lark "at heaven's gate singing." The ear rejoices in their music, and in the cry of the lapwing, swooping with strident wing, while another sense drinks in the delicious fragrance of the newly-ploughed field. All along

> "The flowers spring wanton to be prest;
> The birds sing love on every spray—
> Till too, too soon the glowing west
> Proclaims the speed of winged day."

There was one day in the seven that had an added charm; which shed over all the spirit of rest and devotion, elevating every joyous and happy feeling by the felt absence of toil,—the penalty of sin,—and by the keener sense of the universal presence of God.

When I think of that day there flashes up another picture within the simple Church, far behind the present day in many things, but an object of reverence, and a scene of devotion, less gorgeous and ornate indeed in externals, but not less warm, heart-felt, and pure than that in the most august minster. I see the priest, now gone to his rest, seated within the altar rail, robed as being engaged in a sacred service, while round the outside of the

rail we stood,—stood throughout the whole hour without a thought of complaint,—while he worked into our minds Catechism, and Sacred Story, and into our hearts devout feeling and holy aspiration. And then thought passes on to the simple, reverent service,—how poor! some of my readers would think now,—but carrying with it harmony of feeling and union of hearts such as I fear is now less universal. Then, to us at least, the clash of parties and the jangling of the schools were wholly unknown. Would that they had never existed!

I was supposed to have passed rather beyond the management of my earliest instructress, to whom such a word as "hippopotamus" was a fatal stumbling-block, but who could grind into us the great facts of the multiplication-table, and the moral principles of *Watts' Hymns* and the *Proverbs of Solomon*, the application of which to actual life bulked largely in home discipline. It was to the "Canal-head School" that I was sent, where in consequence of a too lively sense of humour, I made an exceeding narrow escape of the dreaded tawse, and of the interior of the chamber of horrors, within which such introductions were wont to take place. With what religious persuasion that school was connected was a question which troubled me not at all. I believe it was Free Church; but I was exempted from learning the Shorter Catechism, and the "metre Psalms," though of the contents of the former I had a pretty fair idea from hearing them said so often by the victims who had to learn them.

But in no long time our Parson, Mr Harper, took counsel, and resolved to open a school in connexion with the Episcopal Church in Inverurie. It was opened, and continued for some time to be held, in his study. I can, without book, call the first day's roll now. There were just four names on it, and two of us belonged to one family. The clergyman himself was our only teacher, and he taught us well. The care and pains spent on our religious instruction, and on fitting us to take our part in the public worship of God in Church, were models to look back upon now. He was kindly, but very strict, and as the numbers increased held the reins firmly. He had a nose like a pointer for contraband articles, such as "sweeties" of any kind, and tobacco he utterly abhorred. All "sweeties" had to be distributed round the school immediately on discovery, which insured their prompt disappearance. Tobacco troubled him but seldom. But there was one poor half-witted lad who had a *penchant* for it too strong for law. Poor "Jimmy" was one day rising for his lesson just "at the lug o' the law"—in fact behind Mr Harper's chair, when the rest of us were electrified by seeing the latter spring to his feet, and with a box on the ear send Jimmy sprawling on the floor. The face of Jimmy was a study. Not a word had yet been spoken. He looked up in consternation and apprehension at "the minister" frowning above him. Then he slowly gathered himself up off the floor, and, still evidently apprehensive and ready to "jouk," tenderly

and slowly drew his hand across his cheek, and looked at the palm, evidently expecting from his sensations to see it red with his blood. Then our faces, if they could have been seen behind our books, would have presented a striking contrast to Jimmy's, who saw nothing to amuse. Finally the explanation came when Jimmy's tobacco was swiftly confiscated by the avenging hand of the law, and sent where it could be neither smelt nor seen again.

At first very little notice was taken of Mr Harper's venture. It was too small to attract attention. But as our numbers increased we began to receive unpleasant attentions from the scholars attending the "Canal-head" School, who denominated us "the 'Piskies." That portion of them who belonged to the town of Inverurie we frequently encountered *en masse* on their way home. Our numerical weakness was no protection, but rather the reverse, and we sometimes got roughly handled. Mr Harper impressed upon us that we were suffering for the truth, and sought to cultivate in us the spirit of martyrs. I fear the soil was not congenial for such seed. When we were smitten on the one cheek, we found it wofully against the grain to turn the other also. No doubt, while we were getting our lesson, it looked beautiful to be martyrs for the truth. But when it came to practice, the old Adam arose in his strength, and there was a fight.

We did not go out of our way to meet them. But I remember once returning down the street

from doing messages after school, with one companion, M'Leod by name. Suddenly we saw the "Canal-ders" come round the corner in a body of about twenty. One of us at any rate was not happy to see them, for the odds were rather heavy. But there was no escape, and a bold attitude was clearly the best. It was the time of snow, and every one of the enemy was armed with three or four snow-balls. It took very little time to make ourselves equal in that respect. As we drew near, showing, however, no hostile intention, the enemy barred the way, and the usual Homeric war of words ensued, they inviting us to surrender our ammunition, we inviting them to come and take it. Then the battle began. With a rush we gained the church gate, whose massive pillars formed excellent cover. We were only two, each sheltered behind a granite pillar. They were a crowded company without shelter. They could seldom hit us; we could scarcely miss them. They soon seemed to feel that we had thus a kind of moral ascendency; and the effect was to render them dead to all sense of honourable warfare, so that bits of broken bottles, procured from the baker's at the other side of the road, began to fly among their missiles. This caused us to think of better cover. In the rear the foundations of the new school had been dug, trenches between three and four feet deep. This shelter we gained without damage. They dared not follow us close up, lest Mr Harper should discover them from the Parsonage, and cut off their retreat by the Church.

So that unknown to himself, the Apostle of martyrdom had an important share in the battle, most effectually protecting our left flank and preventing the enemy from rushing our trenches. From within these we kept the balls going with all our might. Suddenly their fire ceased, in consequence, we concluded, of the appearance of Mr Harper. Of him we were much more afraid than of the enemy, and accordingly we swiftly vanished from the scene by the rear, not in the least ill-pleased with our work. If he ever knew that we had made such a failure to play the martyr, he never said anything about it. And when, later on, we became one of the strongest schools in the place, and did not fail to let our enemies know it, I think he felt himself unable to alter human nature. In due time we got into our new school, and the visits of Mr Wilkinson, H.M. Inspector, became annual institutions. The care of Mr Harper was over the whole school. Even over the play-ground he was watchful, and there did good work. But the religious instruction was as the apple of his eye. Thoroughly and reverently it was given. The upper classes marched to church on Wednesdays and Fridays, and learnt that the duty of united worship was not confined to Sundays. But there was an occasional catastrophe. The severest punishment I ever saw inflicted was for misconduct in church; and I should think every one who saw it remembers the scene.

I do not remember very many whom the school added to the church; but as I think of those days,

I feel, as I have always felt, that independent altogether of church tenets and church practices, the moral and spiritual influence of the school was very great.

I fear I cannot say so much for the secular side. Mr Harper himself was a competent and good teacher; and some of his temporary assistants while we were in his study, were able young men. But of the rest—and the changes were not infrequent—there was just one whom I felt to be educating me—leading out the powers of my mind. In several points he laid a good foundation for the time to come. As a rule, however, our Normal School men were not to be compared to the graduates who manned the Parish Schools. But there was a distinct attempt to civilise us.

And certainly it was good to feel that the Church cared for her own. We never heard Church or Catechism or service disparaged, but on the contrary learnt what was to be said for them all. It had also an encouraging effect to see the clergy who occasionally visited the school; such as the aged Charles Grant of Meiklefolla, who had baptised me, and who had now retired to end his days at Inverurie; the venerable Nathaniel Grieve of Ellon, Mr Harper's father-in-law; the warm-hearted and impulsive Dean Wilson, with his bunch of heavy seals hanging from his fob; the genial Thomas Wildman of Old Meldrum; and the erect and studious-looking William Walker of Monymusk.

So amid healthful development and growth, and much enjoyment, the years stole by.

> "How noiseless falls the foot of time
> That only treads on flowers!"

The scenes have been shifted often since then; but the brightness of that one remains. It was a good time from every point of view. It is my trust that every one by whose good influence I benefited in those days, has or will have his reward.

XV.

ST. ERCHAN'S.

St. Erchan's had few peers among the lovely spots of a lovely valley.

In the old churchyard, which was still used, stood the ruins of the ancient church. On the outside face of the south wall a marble tablet commemorated the life and virtues of the last established Episcopal minister of St. Erchan's, whose bones rested in peace below. The Revolution had come and turned things upside down, disestablishing the church of which he was a minister; but it did not disturb him. He remained minister of the parish till his death, twenty years afterwards. As in most places north of the Tay, there were few Presbyterians in St. Erchan's in 1688. It was with peculiar feelings that I read the name of my immediate predecessor, cut in the marble more than a hundred and fifty years before. But how changed now the number of the flock! Now, thanks to fifty years of penal laws brought about by the Jacobitism of the Church's leaders, in which the rank and file had little share, there were very few Episcopalians—Thirty-three, young and old, all told—but staunch and true every one, and some of them heroes.

One there was, the acknowledged leader among them, whom I might call "the good Centurion." He did not indeed "build the synagogue" himself, and before the advance was made it was a simpler thing for him to drive eight miles to the nearest church, than for others to walk ten. But it was he who encouraged the clergyman of that church to provide the afternoon service in a schoolroom, lent on Sundays for the purpose; it was his cheery courage and pecuniary help that brought about the occupation of the post by a resident clergyman; it was his ready tact, contagious energy, local popularity, and unremitting labour, which brought it about that in three years the pretty little church was built on the finest site in the village, free of debt, with the nucleus of an Endowment Fund, and with the number of the flock quadrupled.

Helper more staunch and trusty, or friend more faithful no man ever had; and with a lump in my throat, albeit after so many years, I lay this stone on his cairn. His Master and mine will see that he does not lose his reward.

Wherever he went he carried the breezy, cheery frankness, and the straight-forward, courageous promptitude, and anti-stagnation spirit, which mark the men who have been trained in the British Navy. He had seen service in many parts of the globe under the flag that has "braved a thousand years the battle and the breeze," and held a good service pension. He could tell tales of service and adventure from the capture of Acre to the capture

of Sebastopol. To listen to the conversation after dinner when he had some old messmate as his guest was very entertaining. Some of the stories naturally harmonised better with the character of a lively British midshipman, than with that of a rather more than middle-aged churchwarden. But the same honest, bright, capable, resourceful character shone all through. Sham vanished like the dust of a puff-ball, and stiffness becomes cordiality in his presence. He was as incapable of being untrue to his Church as to his country's flag, and was never absent from his place in the earlier days of the schoolroom or afterwards in the church.

Neither in the schoolroom nor in the church did we attempt the Cathedral service; and that for good reasons. In the first place, not having the resources of a Cathedral, we *could* not; in the second place, knowing the feelings and prejudices of the surrounding population, and having no desire to shock, irritate, or otherwise repel them, we *would* not. To "give none occasion to them that desire occasion" is not only Apostolic practice but good strategy. But quiet and simple as the service was, it was, I am persuaded, not destitute of the qualities that make music in the ear of God. Neither did it prove unattractive to men.

To have the Church's service and the Church's Sacraments within so easy reach was, to people who had passed through the experiences of my old widowed parishioner, Mrs Morton, a joy so great as to be at first hardly credible. For a while she could not look out at her window, and see the

Church not a hundred yards off, without wondering whether she was awake or dreaming. When she was married, the nearest churches in three different directions from her home were 28, 16, and 13 miles off, measured in straight lines on the map. But the first Sunday of her married life saw her and her husband on foot by seven in the morning, bent on accomplishing those thirteen miles in time for service. It was over a spur of the Grampians that they had to go. They had got the best directions they could, and set out, chosen companions for life, full of happiness and hope, undismayed at the thought of a Sabbath day's journey of nearly thirty miles. The road, good at first, gradually degenerated into a mere track, and finally came altogether to an end, leaving them without a guide among the trackless heather. They plodded on, but lost their way, and when they found that the hour of service was come, and they could not possibly reach the church, there, in the solitude of the mountain's brow, with full hearts they went through the service in their Prayer Books, and finally reached home again, having done more walking than they ever intended, without getting within sight of the house of God. Yet I think they were as truly worshippers in the church that day as the Beloved Disciple is in the noble army of martyrs.

It was indeed a discouragement; but there was no thought of yielding. During the week they got better directions, and the next Sunday triumphantly accomplished their desire.

In circumstances so adverse she began by making a churchman of her husband, and ended in bringing up her whole family in the faith wherein she was baptized. She belonged to a day when the Doctrine of Reprobation was more heard of than now, and thought it worth a struggle to have each child of hers taught not that the Saviour died for but a select few of the human race, passing the rest by as ordained to eternal death, but to say, "I learn to believe in God the Son, who redeemed me and all mankind." She thought it was not only true, but a surer foundation on which to raise the love of God in their hearts.

No one looking at her would have imagined the strength that lay beneath that quiet, gentle manner. One could not look at her without thinking of the meek and quiet spirit which is, in the sight of God, of great price.

But associated as it was in her case with strong faith and deeply cherished principle, it was also, as all men might see, of great power. I think she holds no ignoble place among the heroines of the faith, and deserves to be had in everlasting remembrance.

Of the little flock of St. Erchan's it might be said that divers of them came from far. From various directions they came, four, five, six, and even seven miles, and from The Forest, on the other side of the river. Thence came Torquhindallachy [Torfinlachy], farmer, and true gentleman —douce, thoughtful, stable in all his ways, and trusty as steel, with his one holiday passion for

the rod and reel. Thence came his family—bairns worthy of their father, and of their quiet, retiring mother. Thence also occasionally, from the very foot of the Grampians, came the Bucket Miller, who could in ten minutes turn a bundle of rough staves into a painted bucket. Thence also, occasionally, came others of higher degree, and not unworthy of that degree.

When I began my shepherding in The Forest, the Church and her ways were in that beautiful but retired region, except by a very few, completely forgotten and unknown. My neighbour and friend, the clergyman of what might be called the mother church of St. Erchan's, used to relate the following example. He was burying a parishioner in The Forest kirkyard, and as the procession approached the gate, took his place at its head, vested in his surplice. What were his sensations may be imagined when he heard the old sexton, who, with his elbows on the top of the churchyard dyke, was watching the approaching cortege, exclaim, "Preserve's a! What's this noo? It canna be the corp on 'ts ain feet!"

The Forest in due time became better acquainted with the Church and with me.

From another direction came the Wool-miller, the humorist of the flock. When his honey-harvest came, there used to come to me regularly a very large black bottle of drained honey, carefully labelled "A Table-spoonful three times a day." The Parish Minister calling on him one day, and interesting himself in his family, asked him how many

children he had. "Weel," said the Miller reflectively, "I hae eleven, and the wife, she has seven." "Dear me!" said the Minister, mentally adding eleven and seven, "what a very large family!" The face of the Miller never altered a muscle, but kept its habitual pleased expression. But he did not tell the Minister that there were only eleven in all, of whom seven were children of his existing wife—his second.

One day he met in the market the policeman, who asked whether things were all quiet in the neighbourhood of the Mill. "Quiet!" said the Miller, "Quiet! did ye say? Man, ye're ready eneugh to come hinderin' and botherin' folk when there's nae use for ye. But when there's a rippet, we look lang and sair ere we see ye. There's been a time nae ordinar' at the Mill sin' yesterday mornin', but we've seen nae sign o' you." "Time!" said the policeman, all awake, if not excited, "what's happened?" "Ye may weel speer that," answered the Miller. "There was a chiel cam' in about, the most awfu' sight ye ever saw. He hadna a rag on him, and couldna speak ony language that we could understan'. He did naething but roar out o' him like a madman. And we couldna get rid o' him. We were forced to put some claes on him, and do the best we could, but I can tell you he's gi'en us a terrible time."

"Man, I wonder I never heard o't," said the policeman. "I canna leave the market, but I'll be ower the first thing in the mornin' to see about it." "A' right," said the Miller, "ye needna

say naething about it: we'll tak' care o' him till ye come."

The policeman duly arrived at breakfast time, to find that the "chiel" who had raised all the disturbance was the Miller's new-born son. He wondered that he never suspected one of the Miller's tricks; but the dram and the "Cryin' Kebbuck" restored harmony. "But min' ye," he said, as he bade the Miller good-bye, "min' ye next time, ye auld rascal, that though I'm the policeman, I'm neither the Doctor nor the Howdie."

In visiting the flock, the walks were many and long; but amid scenery of such beauty, fragrant with the scent of the pine, and alive and vocal with bird life, they could not but be delightful, while with the convoy of one parishioner half-way to the dwelling of the next, they did not seem long, and the only drawback was that the sun could not be made to stand still.

The sun, alas! has not stood still a moment since.

> Time, like an ever-rolling stream,
> Bears all its sons away.

Many of the flock have been borne away to the Church Triumphant since those happy days. But callous would the pastor be who would not "have them in his heart" while memory remains.

XVI.

AN OLD SALT.

To the most casual eye he was unmistakable—an old salt—and of the very briniest flavour. Long-legged and short-necked, he reminded the village boys of a certain mathematical instrument with which they had some acquaintance, and they nicknamed him "The Compass." It was too much trouble to call him "the Compasses." Besides there was about him a forcible unity and concentration totally out of keeping with the plural number, or even with the dual, if their language had possessed such a thing.

If the metallic compass had for them no particular attraction, the flesh and blood one had much less. To have anything to do with him felt like handling a torpedo. Force—explosive force, too, was writ large over his weather-beaten face, which indeed might have been taken for the symbol of "grim-visaged war." If he had lived in Matthew Prior's day, he might have stood for the picture of

"The surly boatman, rough as seas and wind."

His voice was in thorough keeping with his look. It was hoarse and strong, and was habitually used

as if he were shouting commands amid the roar of a gale to a boat's crew a long way off. Moreover, there was always a preliminary clearing of the throat, which was strenuous and forcible, like everything else about him. It sounded like "H-r-r-roar."

Byron describes one of his characters in *Don Juan* as

> ". . . the mildest mannered man
> That ever scuttled ship, or cut a throat"

Our friend never scuttled ship. The nearest approach he could ever have made to such a thing would have been the sinking of one flying an enemy's flag, with British cannon shot. He might, in fact, have been with Nelson at Trafalgar. He certainly carried the scars of wounds received in naval battle, which were worn like decorations, and, like decorations, never alluded to. But if he never scuttled ship or cut a throat, it is also true that he was not "the mildest mannered man." He came down on one with the swoop of a north-westerly squall. If his grand-daughter, of whom he was really very fond, happened to be monopolising the conversation at the other end of the table when he had something to say, his voice would suddenly smite across the intervening space—"H-r-r-roar—will you hold your jaw?" If a neighbour asked him to dinner, he would swing round, bringing his whole broadside to bear, and out it would come—"H-r-r-roar—I'll dine with no living man!" If another said to him, "If you want to pass a bit of time pleasantly, I'll be glad

if you'll get out your fishing-rod, and take a cast on my water," possibly the suspicion that he was getting too old for such a thing made him feel unusually grumpy. At any rate off he went like a double-shotted piece of naval artillery—"H-r-r-roar—If I'd been going to fish, I'd have gone to Stornoway."

But if he was hard on the outside, and even prickly, there was a kernel within which a true judge of character would have recognised to be not by many degrees so hard. Though he was at some pains not to show it, he had a warm feeling for those around him. Even the boys who irreverently called him "the Compass" were objects to him of interest not unkindly. They gave him so wide a berth that they seldom found it out. One of them found himself one day in the Old Salt's sitting-room, delivered into the hands of the enemy. Like Agag, that boy walked delicately. Business being finished, the Old Salt swung round, not unkindly for him, with the question—"H-r-r-roar—are you at school?" "Yes," answered the boy in a voice of deprecating gentleness. "Does Mr —— put you well through your facings?" "Yes," said the boy, feeling relieved, and getting correspondingly bolder. "H-r-r-roar—Does he teach you grammar?" "Yes." "Well, then, what's this?" roared the Old Salt, bringing his fist down on the table with a blow which would have foundered a weaker piece of furniture. Obviously, he meant, "What part of speech is 'table?'" But the

answer came at once from the boy with cool and cheerful frankness—"Why, the table, to be sure." The Old Salt knitted his bushy eye-brows, and glared fiercely at the boy, who stood it apparently with unconscious innocence. Then the threatening, weather-beaten old face relaxed into a smile. Evidently he passed that boy as having "cheek" enough and coolness enough for a British midshipman, and rejoiced that the material for the race was not extinct. A man of war from his youth, he had a feeling that fighting should be left to such. A vehement discussion in a clerical meeting jarred upon him. One day he laid down the paper after reading the account of a field-day in the Robertson-Smith case, with the curt criticism—"Like a bear-r-gar-r-den."

Once, in a manner, he met his match. Notwithstanding his declaration that he would dine with no living man, he nevertheless made—rarely, it must be said—an exception. On this occasion he had dined beyond the river, which had to be crossed by means of a ferry-boat—a clumsy flat-bottomed coble. "Boatie," finding himself in possession of a sufficient number of coppers, had gone over to the village, and drunk with his neighbours, while the Old Salt dined with his friend. Consequently he was not quite master of himself when it became necessary to ferry the Old Salt back homewards. This became evident as soon as the boat was shoved off; for the river, rapid at any time, was at this time in flood, and showed a tendency to sweep them down to the sea, with

which "Boatie" was ill able to cope. Shakespeare says—

> "The cannons have their bowels full of wrath,
> And ready mounted are they to spit forth
> Their iron indignation."

With explosive indignation, the Old Salt opened fire on "Boatie," with his whole broadside, double-shotted. "Boatie," meek as a lamb, made no reply, but struggled with his oars till he got the boat ashore about a field's breadth down stream. From the bank the Old Salt proceeded to complete "Boatie's" demolition, so far as words could effect it. But "Boatie," shoving off a yard or two, out of reach of the Old Salt's hands, felt that now he had the weather-gage of the enemy, and in his turn opened fire on the Old Salt with abundant Dutch courage, and language more heavily shotted than his own. I think "Boatie" felt the more triumphant of the two.

The Old Salt was in his most genial mood when chairs were drawn up to the fire, and, with glass on the corner of the chimney-piece, he put one leg over the other and began—with the usual throat-clearing—"When I commanded the *Jupiter* —," or "When I commanded the *Hercules*—," yarns of great length which every one had heard many times before. Then he was happy in the past. But his auditors had at least to appear to be happy in the present. If the mind of one of them was evidently absent on its own interests and affairs, he would be pulled up sharply—"H-r-r-roar—

you're not attending!" and would at once have to profess the deepest interest.

The Old Salt was remarkably well preserved for his years; but years ultimately tell. On one occasion bronchitis laid hold of him, and the doctor sent him to bed. He was the doctor's patient, but not a patient man. The thing that aggravated him was what he considered the trifling nature of his ailment. "H-r-r-roar—Never was in bed a day but for a wound; and to be knocked over with a cold!"

But he got up again—for that time. However—

> "To every man upon this earth
> Death cometh soon or late;"

and sooner or later

> ". . . the fell sergeant Death
> Is strict in his arrest."

There is no doubt he thought of its coming, and expected it. And when such thoughts come, the heart thinks also of its God, and of its Saviour. But men like the Old Salt do not tell what passes between them and God. Then, as if he had seen the signal flying on board the *Lord High Admiral*, he moved, as of old, to obey and cleared for action —gave directions as to the disposal of all that belonged to him—even of his body; stretched the latter out as if for its last receptacle, and kept it in that position through the last conflict, with his eye on the signal, till his spirit departed to God who gave it.

XVII.

FEATHERED FRIENDS.

Among all the tribes that people the wide world of nature none attracts the sympathetic interest of man more than that which wears feathers. In some families, indeed, of the tribe,—birds of passage, "companions of the spring,"—one poet finds a contrast to man. To the swallow, "swift-turnin' jinkin' round his shiel," he says,—

> "Ah, no! thou need'st not gold, thou happy one!
> Thou know st it not. Of all God's creatures, man
> Alone is poor."

But our own Burns finds among our friends in feathers similitudes for every character and feeling and phase in human experience—even the sorest trials of "poortith cauld." The chilling swoop of calamity and poverty on human life is paralleled by the descent of winter with all its rigours on the birds.

> "Ilk happin' bird, wee helpless thing,
> That in the merry month o' spring
> Delighted me to hear thee sing,
> What comes o thee?
> Whare wilt thou cower thy chitterin' wing,
> An' close thine e'e?"

And—

> "The birds sit chitterin' on the thorn,
> A' day they fare but sparely,
> An' lang's the night frae e'en to morn,
> I'm sure it's winter fairly."

Again and again he finds in bird life the counterpart to human liability to sorrow, loss, and bereavement.

"Hear the woodlark charm the forest,
Telling o'er his little joys;
Hapless bird? a prey the surest
To each pirate of the skies."

And again—

"But hawks will rob the tender joys
That bless the little lint-white's nest."

And of human grief over bereavement he finds the exquisite symbol in the same quarter:—

"The mother linnet in the brake
Bewails her ravished young;
And I, for my lost darling's sake
Lament the live-day long."

Not, however, for such experiences alone does the feathered tribe furnish him with symbols, but for every happier feeling and phase of life. Here they represent happy-hearted diligence:—

"And aye she wrought her mammy's wark,
And aye she sang sae merrily;
The blithest bird upon the bush
Had ne'er a lighter heart than she."

The feelings of the lonely mother tenderly fending for her children, while her husband is far parted from them all by flood or field, are tenderly contrasted with those of the feathered mother.

"Within yon milk-white hawthorn bush,
Among her nestlings sits the thrush;
Her faithfu' mate will share her toil
Or wi' his song her cares beguile;
But I, wi' my sweet nurslings here

Nae mate to help, nae mate to cheer,
Pass widowed nights and joyless days
While Willie's far frae Logan Braes."

And does he not find our little feathered friends the speaking emblems of love in all its moods?

" The crystal waters round us fa',
The merry birds are lovers a'."

And again (not failing to note the repetitions in the thrush's song)—

" While falling, recalling,
The amorous thrush concludes her sang,"

And again, more generally, they are the emblem of the enjoyment of love and freedom.

" The mavis mild wi' mony a note
Sings drowsy day to rest ;
In love and freedom they rejoice,
Wi' care nor toil opprest."

The lives of birds and men having thus so many points in common, and touching similar springs of emotion, no one can be surprised that there should be sympathy and mutual interest between man and his friends in feathers. The young of both sexes in great numbers show this by their efforts to obtain feathered pets and companions. How this looks from their own side they are keen enough to see; but comparatively few of them have imagination enough to realise what its cost is to their feathered friend. They do not realise how it hurts him to be handled; how ill he must feel after the unnatural food they give him; how terribly he must miss the companionship of his

own kind, whose language he understands, and who understand him. Above all, they do not realise what to him, denizen of the wide realm of air as well as of earth, is the loss of his liberty. Is it any wonder that so many of them pine and die, to the grief of their affectionate but thoughtless human friend? It must be a bird of strong constitution that lives; it must be a bird almost as philosophical as Cowper's jackdaw, who can become naturalised in his unnatural sphere. Yet there are robust and philosophical birds.

One such I knew many years ago. He was a hoodie-crow, and was purchased for the sum of twopence from some children herding their parents' cows in the wood. No questions were asked as to how they got him; and he never told himself. His first home was a packing-box set on its side, with bars nailed across where the lid had been, and a perch conveniently placed. It was set up four feet above the ground, and through the bars he could see all that went on. He had his thoughts about it. He knew from the first his human friend, or rather owner, and watched eagerly for his return in the afternoon from school. He fluttered his wings with delight as he would have done on the return of his mother. He connected his friend's return with a considerable spell of liberty —that is, such liberty as could be enjoyed with a clipped wing. His human friend put him down beside a stone, and then turned it over. Lo! there were under it crawling and creeping things which instinct taught him were meant for his food, and

which were at once so used. Another stone was turned over with the same result. A few days of this, and he could find them for himself, and was allowed to do it, getting long spells of freedom, and following his friend. One day a big stone in a juicy place beside the grindstone was turned over. He was as ready and eager as a terrier at a rat-hole. But what he saw staggered him. He felt like the man in Homer's simile when suddenly face to face with the snake in the mountain glen. He started back, eagerly scanning the phenomenon. Surely it could not be a worm—it was too big. Could it be some unknown deadly creature? Whatever it was it did not see him; but it felt that it was uncovered, which might not be good for it, and began to withdraw itself into the hole. To see it disappear was more than hoodie-crow human nature could stand. With tremendous suddenness, as if it had been a hot coal, he snatched it out of the hole, throwing it to some little distance. In a safe position he watched it wriggling and twisting, and philosophised. It looked very like a worm in spite of its size. If it were a worm, he could be more dangerous to it than it could be to him. He would try its mettle. Edging up with a sort of flanking movement, he seized it and gave it a vigorous shake. It wriggled and twisted still more vehemently, and was evidently in terror. He instantly charged in, and by a severe attack broke the large worm in two, incontinently swallowing one half. He had had so many that he could do no more.

He determined to put the remainder into his larder, which was a hole at the foot of a gate-post. But he knew better than bury a live worm, and thought even half a worm might get away. So he proceeded to kill it. He lived before the days of Fuzzy-Wuzzy, who (*vide* Kipling),

"Is generally shammin' when he's dead."

But he evidently had a suspicion of shamming on the part of that half-worm. So he walked about for a little, pretending to be taking no concern, but at the same time slyly watching for the slightest movement. At last he was satisfied, and carrying it to his larder, took all the chips and stones out of it, put in his game, and, replacing the stones on the top of it, proceeded to wipe his beak with great satisfaction.

To confidence and trust he always responded with friendliness and faithfulness. When at last his wing was allowed to remain unclipped, he made no difference beyond extending his beat, and always roosted for the night in his long-accustomed place.

He was not on terms of great intimacy with the other denizens of the farm-yard, but treated them all with unvarying gentlemanly politeness. Their treatment of him was marked rather by unconcern, which was broken only once. He never harmed the smallest chicken. But the mothers of chickens always distrusted him. One of them on one occasion when he came walking round the corner of the hen-house allowed her maternal anxieties to

run away with her. She put down her head and rushed at him with wings down. She intended to spring over his head, striking him as she passed. He ducked his head and avoided the blow, and then caught her a sharp peck on the side of the head, which caused her to return with much bad language to her brood, while he sedately continued his walk. The noise she made reached the ears of the cock, who promptly appeared on the scene with much hurry and importance. The instant he saw the hoodie he jumped to a conclusion without asking a single question. Down went his wings and his head, and he charged. He intended to inflict a severe wound with his spur as he went over the calm and unflinching crow. But his stroke was baulked as the hen's had been, and in the twinkling of an eye he was seized by the hackles, or, as we should say, by the scruff of the neck, and dragged by main force across the yard. What the sequel was intended to be is unknown; for the hackles gave way, and the cock took the opportunity to beat a hasty and noisy retreat.

The incident made no difference in the behaviour of the hoodie-crow, and he was for the future left alone.

One day he went with the men to the hay-field, when he found many interesting insects, and in the course of his wanderings came across the dead body of a crow. Its motionless and unresponsive silence puzzled him. He spoke to it after his fashion, but in vain. He gently pulled its leg to attract its attention, but could get no response.

He turned it over with his beak, and it was as inanimate as a stone. He was sore puzzled, and distressed. He walked round about it, stopping once or twice to gaze and consider. At last he walked sadly away. But he was evidently thinking about it still, for now and then he halted and looked back with pathetic longing.

The same day he was betrayed into an act of intemperance,—not in drink, but in food. In the faill dyke by the hay-field he found a mouse's nest with four young ones a day or two old, but with eyes yet unopened. He promptly swallowed them whole, one after another. Their skins must have impeded digestion, for he was not himself for two or three days. It was a lesson to him. A rat or a young rabbit was a glorious feast to him, and while at it he was a transformed bird, the ancestral nature showing in every movement and look; but he never took too much again.

One afternoon he had a large party. With a crowd of about a hundred crows around him, he was carefully going over the field by the stable, within ten yards of the stable door, where ordinarily a crow would not have gone for his life. The liveliness and cheerfulness of the conversation was most amusing, and the whole thing was suggestive of a dinner party or an afternoon tea. Moreover, no host could have made himself more universally agreeable, or done the honours with a better grace.

One day when the peats were being carted home, he was perched during the mid-day rest of the

horses on the front of an empty cart, looking down at his human friend below. The latter pulled a small fragment off a peat, and threw it towards him. He caught it in his beak. The act was repeated again and again till the hoodie was quite an adept. As a reward a little bit of oat-cake was substituted for the bit of peat. It was caught as deftly as the peat, but not dropped in the same way. It was swallowed with great satisfaction.

Poor fellow! His *bonhomie* was fatal. He was well-known to all, and friends with all. But, while he was a gentleman, the same could not be said of all. One day in November he observed on the road behind the corn-yard a wood-cart returning empty to the woods for another load, with the driver sitting in front. He alighted on the cart, and walked up to hold friendly converse with the man. But that human animal, or inhuman man, with one of the pins used for twisting tight the ropes round his load, struck him on the head, and with a quiver or two my poor friend lay dead. In one instant he took a life which in a thousand lifetimes he could not restore, and tossed the poor accusing corpse off the cart into the road. Some hours afterwards there was a tearful funeral at the foot of an aged ash, and, as the Ettrick Shepherd says of the funeral of his dog, "there was a sair change for the waur on the afternoon light" when the sorrowful rites were done.

Cruden Parsonage, in spite of this hard climate, boasted of old trees and shrubbery about the delightful garden. In a district where trees and

shrubbery were scarce, it was naturally the home of many friends in feathers. They knew whom they could trust.

One day among the gooseberry bushes I noticed a young robin hop up to pick anything he could get out of a gooseberry-skin just dropped from my hand. It was at my foot, but he was not afraid. "Oh," I thought, "you like that, do you? I'll give you something better." I broke the skin of a ripe gooseberry, and dropped it as I had dropped the skin. He found it more satisfactory, and at once understood that I meant to befriend him. He never failed to appear for his share on future occasions. One day going down the middle walk of the garden I stooped to pull up a weed, and threw it on the grass by the side of the walk. Instantly he hopped out of the little hedge, thinking it was meant for him. He found a tiny worm among the roots. Next time I went out I took some crumbs in my pocket, and stooping as before, threw one on the side of the walk. He appeared at once, and evidently appreciated it. This went on till he would take them from between my fingers, knowing, apparently, that I respected and liked him, and would not try to touch him. I think he often looked and waited for my coming. By and by he would cling to the stone at the edge of the window and look in to see if I were there. One day, the window being open, he came in. I dropped some crumbs for him under a fern-case in the window. From this he advanced to demanding admission by fluttering against the glass.

His knock was attended to, and he was admitted. He knew where to go for his food. He would stay a good part of the afternoon, and came to know every corner of the room, and to be as much at home with my wife as with me. If any other person came in, he at once flew up and perched on the curtain-pole over the window, where there was little light, and no one noticed him. His desire to get out he showed in the same way as his desire to get in, and the window was opened for him.

One day in the winter he knocked at the window, but when it was opened would not come in. What do you mean? I wondered. At last it occurred to me that he wanted crumbs put out for his feathered friends outside. It turned out to be a good guess. When the crumbs were put out on the window-sill he at once came in, and, perched on the top of the fern-case like a ruler of the feast, enjoyed seeing the others take their food. But it was apparent that his benevolence was not universal. He was manifestly at feud with a certain hedge-sparrow. If that particular bird hopped down for a crumb, he at once dashed himself against the glass to drive him away. I daresay he would have told a very plausible story to justify his treatment of the hedge-sparrow.

When spring came he found a mate. One day we had gone out, leaving the window open. When we came in they were both there; but the newcomer was in such terror that she could not find the way out by the window where she came in.

He cuffed her well, and showed her the way. I think he had a mind that the nest should be in that room, but could not overcome her fears. Foolish bird! She brought about the building of the nest in the ground-ivy on the faill dyke between the garden and the road. The boys passing to school found and robbed it. The young savages! We never saw our friend again.

In Cruden there were more magpies than in most places, probably because there were fewer gamekeepers. A family of them was brought up in the parsonage garden every year. In those parts it is a law of the magpies, as fixed as any law of the Medes and Persians, that there shall be only one nest at any given place. I once counted seventeen magpies together in the garden in the early spring—evidently a convention met to settle who was to have the site. How the question was settled I have no idea; but it was generally done peaceably. Once, however, a claimant who apparently disputed the finding of the court was put to death.

Our magpie was a stand-offish gentleman, sometimes impudent and abusive, and not always strictly honest. On the front wall of a thatched cottage behind the Parsonage, inhabited by old Nellie and Lizzie Sangster, hung a "fish-hake" —an equilateral triangle made of strips of wood with bars across furnished with nails whereon to hang the fish. From our bedroom one morning I saw the magpie alight on the ridge of the cottage roof. He made his way down the sloping thatch,

and after reconnoitring disappeared over the edge, but in an instant re-appeared with one of Nellie's fish in his beak, which he brought up to the ridge, and after helping himself to a bit carried it off to his family. If he knew Virgil he was probably quoting "*Sic vos non vobis.*"

But he respected property in eggs, provided always that they were laid in the proper places. If he found any laid away among the bushes, he held that they were his perquisite. It was a lesson to see him despatch one. I wonder how any of us would do it, with no egg-cup, no egg-spoon, no hands, only a beak. How could we make a meal of the slimy and evasive contents of an egg lying on the ground with only a beak, however polished and sharp? My friend did not even require time to consider. He dug his beak all its length into the egg, lifted it up above his head, sucked the whole contents down his throat, and, with a shake of his head, sent the empty shell flying to one side. It was done in an instant. He was past-master at the business.

When a stack of corn was taken in to be thrashed and a number of mice, and perhaps a rat or two, were killed in the process, he watched his opportunity when no one was near, and carrying off the dead mice concealed them in holes among the ploughed land with a view to future consumption. The rats were too heavy to fly away with, but he dragged them to a quiet place, and in due time left only an empty skin. At such times he fared sumptuously for days.

Usually he built his nest close to the house in the very topmost twigs of a sycamore, called in Scotland a plane, tree. It was a very strong basket-work-roofed construction of gooseberry prunings, into which a number of the tree's twigs were worked, so that it would require great force to pull to pieces or to pull down. It would stand any breeze that blew; and had only one entrance, which was in the most inaccessible side, and just large enough for the magpie. Even a moderate-sized hand would find difficulty in getting through, and would probably suffer in the process from gooseberry thorns. One year he built it at the foot of the garden, near the road. He was very foolish, which ordinarily he was not. He would have been much safer nearer me. He might have known that there were people in the neighbourhood fond of having a tame, or at any rate captive, magpie. One night there was a very heavy east-south-east storm; and in the morning my friend's nest was on the ground at the foot of the tree, rent in pieces. In the forenoon I met a neighbour, who said—

"Extraordinar' gale last night. It's blawn doon the pyet's nest."

"*Most* extraordinar' gale," I replied; "for it gaed up the tree wi' tacketty boots on, and left their marks on the bark."

My neighbour's face would have made an amusing snap-shot.

A pet magpie once lived close by. One day his owner's wife set the table for tea, and went

out to the milk-house for cream. On returning she met him on the door-step with the skin under his chin greatly distended. She wondered, and investigated. He had taken the flowers out of a tumbler in the window and arranged them in the jam-pot in the middle of the table; and in course of time it was discovered that he had previously put a long piece of tape down to the bottom of the jam. What he had under his chin was the portion of the butter which he had been unable to put under his waistcoat.

My parishioner, Sandy Taylor of the Bullers, was as fond of feathered friends as I was, and, indeed, of all living creatures. Only he took away their liberty, which I did not. If you sat down on the chair at the end of the big chest under the window, ten to one a crab with a back as broad as your hand would emerge from underneath it, and scuttle sideways across the floor. He once had a magpie, of which a neighbour's wife said, "It's an evil cratur', sir; the little-uns canna get lookit oot for't." Its fate is to this day uncertain. It was last seen fighting a weasel down on the shore. Possibly the weasel could have cleared up the mystery. He had a cormorant which lived in family with him, going regularly every day to the sea for its food. He had a puffin—locally called a Tammie—with a most "dour" expression of countenance, and beak most formidable, who was more than a match for the cat when they fell out about the contents of the dish under the dresser. He had a jack-daw, which in a few

minutes could so mix up a line that to unravel it again would be work for half-an-hour.

Poor Sandy! When he grew old he became unfit for work, and went to live with a relative in Aberdeen. His love for living creatures went with him, but not the living creatures. By this time I had been away from Cruden for a number of years. On one occasion, at the end of a meeting in the Granite City, I suggested to two brethren that we should occupy a spare hour by going over to the Old Town, and seeing the old College once more. As we turned into King Street I said, "Let's cross over, and see what Sim, the naturalist, has in his window." It generally contained a number of stuffed birds and "auld nick-nackets"; for Sim was an antiquary as well as a naturalist and taxidermist. As we approached, an old man stood there before us, in a sailor-like blue jacket, intently gazing in. I hardly looked at him, and at any rate his back was towards us. But when I spoke, calling my friends' attention to something in the window, he started as if a pistol had gone off at his ear, and sprang round facing me. It was Sandy, with his hand stretched out, and tears welling up in his eyes. It was a delight to see him and grasp his hand again. Poor old man! The nearest approach he could now find to his old, intelligent, responsive feathered friends were stuffed ones with glass eyes in Sim's window. Sandy has joined the host across the flood. To me, among many happy recollections of him, is the remembrance of our common love for our feathered friends.

Photo by J. Shivas, Peterhead.

THE BULLERS OF BUCHAN: "THE POT."

XVIII.

JAKE ALEXANDER.

Many readers have probably heard or read of a certain Mr Buller, who, while expatiating on the antiquity and distinguished connexions of his family, was quietly asked by an auditor whether he was related to the Bullers of Buchan. "Oh, yes," he replied; "they branched off from our family some few centuries ago." The quiet auditor who asked the question probably thought that the likeness between the two branches of the family did not extend to hardness of head. He knew, as most of my readers probably know, that the Bullers of Buchan consist of immense precipices of red granite rock, certainly many centuries older than any family of the same name, and of a quality infinitely harder than the brains of Mr Buller, who acknowledged relationship with them.

Though not in the loftiest part, the Bullers are the most famous feature of the grand rock scenery of the Buchan coast. Against that coast the German Ocean has been heaving itself for ages. Wherever it has found a weak place in the form of a bit of rotten rock, it has hammered it out, with the result that the coast line consists of a series of narrow creeks running into the land between

cluding that of the piper who disappeared in one of the caves, and was heard playing as far into the earth as the farm of Pothead. He could tell the visitor everything of the kind. He generally had the opportunity; for it was he and his brother George (as good a soul as ever it was my lot to know) who most frequently provided and manned the boat which took visitors to see the sights.

Jake was a born orator; fluent of speech, and lavish of dramatic action. His powers in this way were well known to all, from the highest downwards. At the celebration of the coming of age of the heir of the Earl of Erroll, Jake was standing at the door of the ball-room at Slains Castle, when Lord Erroll appeared with the house-party and guests. As the leading man of the village he stepped out, and seizing his Lordship's hand said —"Earl of Erroll, I—I—can't express my feelin's." "Well, John," smilingly replied his Lordship, who knew them all—features, names, and characteristics,—"that's not very usual with you; but I'm obliged to you for your good feeling all the same. Come along and let's open the ball." It certainly was not usual with him, but was as artistically effective as the picture of Grief, covering her face with her hands. He was rather fond of

"Words of learned length and thundering sound,"

which his own learning did not always enable him successfully to manage. But when an accident happened he was unaware of it, and sailed gallantly on. When the fishermen were agreed on a certain

course, they were "synonymous" for it. If he saw that you were impatient to be off, he was afraid he was "deteckin'" you. But there was seldom any doubt about his meaning, and not seldom it had a force and point which were decidedly uncomfortable for the adversary. The adversary was generally some religionist of a "persuasion" different from his own. Like so many inhabitants of the old fishing villages, he was a staunch Episcopalian, and was never half-hearted or backward as a defender of the faith. Of course defenders of the faith are not all gifted alike. Some are saints; some are theologians; some are both; and each does his part in virtue of his particular gift. He was far from being a worse man than his neighbours; but for all that, I know he would never have claimed to be a strength to the church as a saint. Perhaps it would be better for the Church and also for her members if more of them aimed at being a strength to her in that way. It was more as a theologian that Jake stood forth as a defender of the faith, and worked his oratorical guns.

Perhaps it was due to the environment in which he grew up. In his boyhood there was still war in the gates between the Church and all non-Episcopalian bodies; but it had become less embittered than it had been in the days nearer to the Revolution. There was a good deal more of good-humoured banter, though even so the banter was never without point. He had heard tales of the encounters of the heroes of the previous genera-

tion; such as the retort of Mr Philip of Nethermill, when at the end of a long argument his Presbyterian antagonist said, "Weel, i' maugre o' your neck [in spite of yourself], ye'll *hae* to come to us in the hinder end" (meaning to his grave in the parish churchyard). "Ou aye, I ken that. D' *ye* ken what for? Just because it's the place o' a' corruption." Jake had been brought up on such tales. And good, diligent Dr Pratt had not failed to labour hard at all the points between the church and other bodies. His little book called "The Old Paths" had expounded the necessity for Episcopal ordination of ministers. It was said that whatever text he started from he never got to the end of a sermon without having in something about Baptismal Regeneration. So Jake was to some extent the product of his environment.

His oratorical power and memory for texts of Scripture were effective weapons. He could overwhelm a revival preacher with a torrent of language more voluminous than his own. It was as when Aaron's rod swallowed up the rods of the magicians. And he sometimes shot very straight.

A couple of these well-meaning people once undertook to evangelise the village of the Bullers, and one Sunday afternoon took up a position in the open space between the rows, and opened with a hymn. So great was Jake's influence that they got no congregation, but were left severely to themselves. This was serious. They determined to make a house to house visitation and invite the

people to their preaching. They began with Jake; and the neighbours seeing them go in promptly followed in anticipation of a lively skirmish.

When they invited him he responded with a flat refusal, and swiftly carried the war into the enemy's country. "What business hae *ye* to stan' up an' tak' the Lord's Name in your mou' like that?"

"We're called to do it."

"Ay; I'll warrant ye think that. And sae did the seven sons of Skavie [Sceva] the Jew. They thought they could tak' the Lord's Name in their mou' like Paul did; but when YON LAD cam' out upon them he let them see anither story."

Jake's interlocutors had never met with this argument, and were considerably shattered. The only answer was to tell Jake where he was going (ultimately)—a thing which such people always think they know. To which a neighbour ventured to respond, "Judge not, my bonnie lad, or ye'll hae a fair chance to be there afore him."

Jake was not only thoroughly satisfied with the Church to which he belonged as the institution of Jesus Christ. He was as thorough-going an admirer of the material fabric of St. James's, which, built of red granite from foundation-stone to the top of the tall spire, crowned the Chapel Hill, and was visible far and near. My neighbour at Ellon once took some friends to see the Bullers. Jake, as usual, took the party out in his boat to view the lions of the coast from the sea. In the course of this process he brought the boat to a spot well

known to him, where St. James's could be seen through the jagged hole which pierces the impressive mass of Dunbuy—a picture framed in everlasting red granite. "Now, Mr M'Leod," said Jake in triumphant tones, "did ye ever see a church like St. James's?" Poor Mr M'Leod! It was very hard upon him. Was not his own church at Ellon as the apple of his eye? Was it not one of the works of the famous George Edmund Street? Was he not in the habit of expatiating on the beauties of the "narthex" at the west end, and the "campanile" which rose over the vestry at the north side of the chancel? It was humiliating to be asked such a question. But always genial, and always polite, Mr M'Leod was quite equal to getting out of the uncomfortable corner with a kindly joke.

Living in an atmosphere of debate has its drawbacks. It is apt to fix the whole tone of the mind; and men who have lived such a life are sometimes found choosing for their deathbed-reading the most controversial passages in the Epistles of St. Paul. It came to Jake years after my day. Close upon the end his mind was working on its old lines. "What are these sects but the creatures of a day? Where now are the Agnostics [Gnostics], and the Druids, and the Huggonots?"

Of course he realised the One Foundation. Who that for many years had followed the Church's teaching in regular commemorations from the manger at Bethlehem to the Cross of Calvary and the Ascension from Olivet, could have done

otherwise? But habit is strong, especially in the hour of weakness. Controversy is sometimes a painful necessity and a disagreeable duty. It should be balanced by increased devotion.

Jake's devotions in Church and debates out of it have long been over. His vigorous spirit has gone to Him who knoweth whereof we are made, and his body rests in the churchyard on the sunny side of his beloved St. James's.

XIX.

A HIGHLANDER FROM KILKENNY.

I HAVE not the least idea of his name. I was in his company for scarcely sixty minutes; and this vignette is but a print from a snap-shot in an express train.

It must, therefore, be a strong contrast to the pictures of Kate and other friends whom I knew, fair day and foul, for half-a-score of years, and for whom I had come to cherish a warm regard. Besides, a glance was enough to reveal that he was a striking contrast in himself.

He was my *vis-à-vis*, occupying the corner facing the engine on the sunny side of the carriage. His coat—a thinnish greatcoat—was somewhat threadbare; and he looked as if there might not be the usual complement of garments underneath it. But he had the smart look and unmistakable set-up of an old soldier. His age might be over sixty, and his hair, including his moustache, was pretty grey. But there was nothing "grim-visaged" about him. Alert, intelligent, and cheerful, he had the look of an inveterate optimist. Moreover, there was nothing artificial about his good spirits, for he was as sober as any total abstainer.

When we settled down, some one broke the ice in the usual British manner. "Very cold weather for this time of the year."

"Right you are," said my *vis-à-vis*, "as no one knows better than I do; for I had to pawn my waistcoat, and my cornet, too, to get back to Crowdston."

"But what better will you be in Crowdston without your cornet?" asked another.

"Oh," he replied, drawing from his breast-pocket a brass flageolet, "this'll do it. This'll soon get out my cornet, and the waistcoat 'll soon follow it. I'm all right."

"Do you find the people of Crowdston liberal with their coppers?" I ventured to ask.

"Oh yes, sir," he said; "but then I know how to do it. If I see a Highlander in the crowd, I give him this," and putting his flageolet to his mouth he played in first-rate style about half of *The Haughs o' Cromdale*, and a few bars of *The Cock o' the North*.

"If I see a Welshman," he continued, "I give him this" (a few bars of *The Men of Harlech*).

"If I see a Frenchman, he gets this" (a few bars of *Partant pour la Syrie*). "And naturally that touches them in a tender place," I said.

"Yes, sir; and fetches out their pennies. I'll soon get out my cornet."

Our fellow travellers were evidently interested in the conversation, and in my optimistic *vis-à-vis*; and not least the man next to him—a sergeant of artillery in uniform, coming from Ultima Thule

to learn the new book—who, sitting immovable as a statue, kept observing my friend out of the corner of his eye.

I was interested in him myself, and said, "You've got the mark of the drill-sergeant on you. What regiment did you serve in?"

"The —— Highlanders, Sir," he replied with alacrity, as if the thought put new vigour into his waistcoat-less body: "I'm a Highlander from Kilkenny. Heard o' that place?"

"Oh, yes. That's where the famous fighting cats lived, isn't it? And what part of the world have you served in?"

"Thirteen years in India, Sir, and a very good place, too, especially for soldiers."

"I daresay you've seen some interesting things during all that time in India."

"You may say that, Sir. You've often heard that truth's stranger than fiction. And I'll tell you one of the best examples of that you ever heard. We were at a place called Neemuch, and it was mighty hot. A man could easy raise a thirst. There was only a certain amount o' drink to be got at the canteen, and that wasn't enough for Old Peter Carruthers and me. But we knew of a place outside where there was any amount of native stuff, uncommon strong stuff, to be got; so we went to get some. We didn't take bottles, which are unhandy. But we got sheep's bladders, half-a-dozen each. Well, we filled the bladders, and tied them in a string, and slung them over our left shoulders; and we filled ourselves too, and

started on the return march. But we couldn't keep touch at all. It was getting pretty late, and as we were passin' a jungly bit o' the road wi' a roar and a crash out sprang a big tiger on old Peter. Down went Peter, and down went the tiger on the top of him, and the brute's mouth just happened upon them bladders, and he thought it was old Peter's blood, and drank down the stuff. In a jiffy he was mortal drunk, not bein' seasoned to it. And there was old Peter, lyin' across the path, mortal; and the tiger across the top of him, proper mortal; and I wasn't sober myself. But I remembered about one of our Lieutenants who was very fond of shootin' at tigers, and I made my way to him. He would hardly believe me, but he was so keen on the sport that he ended in comin' on the chance of its bein' true. Well, he put a bullet into the beast, and promoted him from mortal to dead; and the skin o' that tiger did for the apron for the big drum o' the —— Highlanders for many a day. I guess that's stranger than fiction, isn't it, now?"

"Well," I said, rather hedgingly, "it beats all the fiction I ever heard."

The occupants of the carriage were in fits of laughter, some with tears running down their cheeks.

"Oh, but," interposed the artillery sergeant, who also had served in India, "you mustn't suppose that's fiction. Not a bit of it. They saw that tiger right enough. They were both in the blues. Did you call the place Neemuch?"

"Yes: Neemuch."

"Are you sure it wasn't Toomuch?"

"Well," he said, in a melancholy tone, amid the laughter of his fellow-travellers, "it was too much for that tiger any way. But it just shows that truth is too much stranger than fiction. I hardly ever get people to believe that story."

I began to talk to the artillery sergeant from Thule. He gave a glowing account of the place and its people. When he was stationed in Crowdston he could never get the doctor out of the house; in Thule he never needed one. It was a cheap place, too, and he had stayed there longer than he would otherwise have done because he had a large family.

"How many have you got?" I asked.

"Seven."

"Oh, that's nothing. I have had three friends who had thirteen each."

In a quiet, matter-of-fact voice the Highlander from Kilkenny said, "I was blessed with twenty-one."

A shout of laughter greeted this statement.

To let the Highlander down soft I said, "Well, I did once know a man who had twenty, and one woman was the mother of nineteen of them."

"In my case," said the Highlander, "there were three women."

"What! Have you been married three times?"

"Three times, Sir."

"I don't know what Josh Billings would say to you. He says that losing your wife's like fall-

ing out of a cherry-tree: if you're not hurt it's a good reason for not going up again."

"It would have been better for me if I hadn't—the last time, anyhow. I'd come home from my work, and there she would be, lyin' drunk, and the very grate pawned out o' the house; and she bad-used the children, till I took them and went to America to get away from her."

His tone during this melancholy recital had for once sunk below the optimistic; and his audience no longer laughed, and no longer seemed to disbelieve him.

But the mention of America seemed at once to enliven him again, and he said, "Speakin' o' America reminds me of another case of truth stranger than fiction. I was playin' my cornet in the streets o' New York, when one o' them blizzards came along. I couldn't get more than two or three bars o' the tune out, when the keys froze, and I was stuck. I blew and blew, thinkin' the heat o' my breath would thaw them; but not a bit of it, they wouldn't budge. A man in the door o' a drink-shop opposite shouted, 'What are ye standin' there at, ye old fool? Come in!' Well! I thought that was a very polite invitation to a very good place, and put my muscles in motion to spring towards the door; but, you bet, I couldn't. I was froze to the ground like a live statue on a pedestal. That man had to pour three buckets o' boilin' water round my feet before I was riz off the street. But I got off at last, and sprang into the shop for fear

I'd be planted again, and made for the stove, and would you believe it—I froze to the stove!"

Here a shout of laughter interrupted the vendor of "truth stranger than fiction;" but, not in the least disconcerted, he calmly went on—"Well, I thought, the trade o' playin' the cornet in the street's played out in the meantime: I'll make myself comfortable for a little any way. So I ran to a pawn-broker's shop two doors off, and handed him my cornet. 'I want money on that.' 'How much?' 'Dollar.' 'Here you are'; and he put my cornet on a high-up shelf. Well, before I had finished my business with him, the heat up there thawed my cornet, and if it didn't start and play the tunes I was playin' into it when it froze up!"

When the explosion of laughter which this statement produced had somewhat died down, and people were wiping their eyes, he went on—"My uncle snatched down my cornet and dropped it into my hand as if it had burnt his fingers, yelling, 'Take that thing out o' my shop! What do you mean bringin' a thing like that here? Out o' here with it, I tell you!' and I went, dollar and all. Now, I believe that is so much stranger than fiction that you won't believe it."

For a moment his audience appeared quite exhausted. At last I ventured to say, "Well, now, do you know, I'm downright sorry that a smart man like you, who has worn the uniform of the ——— Highlanders, should be so low down as

playing for pennies in the street, with no waistcoat to turn the wind."

"Oh, bless you, Sir, it's not half a bad trade if you only knew. But you see when I was made my head was not properly finished — some bumps amissin'."

"Didn't pass the Dean o' Guild, did you?" interjected the artilleryman.

"No; that's the way it all happened."

"Oh, come now," I said, "that's not fair. I'm sure I'm stating bare facts when I say that you were once as bonny and bright and clever a boy as stepped in seven parishes, with no vice in you worse than boyish tricks. That's how you were made. And your mother sat looking at you, and began to dream a day-dream of what a splendid man you'd be, and what a noble life you'd live in the world, and thanked God for you. And what has made you different? Wasn't it just yourself?"

"Well, come to that, I suppose it was myself. But here's what myself's like. I get into a splendid situation—I've been in fine situations in famous bands—and for six months I'm as happy as the day's long. Then I begin to get restless, and by and by I can't stand it. I must throw it up and be off."

The train pulled up, and he rose to get out.

"Well," I said, "I hope you'll soon get out your cornet, and never need to go near a pawn-shop again, and nobody knows better than yourself how to do it."

"All right, Sir, thank you. I'll soon have it out. Never fear. *Nil desperandum!*"

With a "good-night" on both sides, the Highlander from Kilkenny stepped out of our sight.

The brightness went out of the carriage with him. I suspect we were all thinking what he *might have been*. If, for instance, old Jacob Dean had had the training of him, he would, I think, have set as strong a mark on his character as the drill-sergeant had set on his body. He would have drilled him and drilled him, and drilled him in the exercise of "not giving his soul the desires that pleased her," and would have turned him out straight and strong and steady—no longer unstable as water.

But it was not to be. Our Highlander was born at Kilkenny.

XX.

WILLIE HAY.

When I took up my work as incumbent of St. James's Church, which from the top of the Chapel-hill looks down on Cruden Bay and away across the German Ocean, I made the acquaintance, for the first time in my life, of Scottish Fishermen. Splendid specimens I found them, both as Scotsmen and as fishermen.

The sudden dangers of the fisher's life, acting on the character through the lives of many generations of ancestors as well as their own, had made their natures as susceptible to excitement as the sea by which they lived, and on which they laboured. But no warmer hearts existed. In the hour of danger none were more brave; in the hour of suffering none more tender.

Of five fishing villages, the most distant was about five miles from the church on the south side; the nearest less than two. In the latter, which was called Whinnyfold, there were in those days three brothers, all householders, all fathers, all well advanced in life. The youngest would never see his sixtieth birthday again. In stature they were peers: I do not think one of them was under six

feet. But though sons of the same parents they were strongly differentiated in appearance and character. John keenly felt the serious and awe-inspiring, George the genial and humorous. The characteristic of James was that he feared nothing. George's face bespoke a kindly and sunny disposition, and the pleasant humour rippled about his mouth, and twinkled in his eye. One observed that one particular side of his mouth did most of the smiling, the other being nearly always grave. The face of James, dark, weather-beaten, wrinkled and scarred, bespoke great force of character, daring, and perhaps defiance of all control.

One night when out for the herring-fishing—the three brothers in one boat—they were driven westwards before a fierce gale, in utter darkness, none knowing whither, or to what fate. For some time none of them had spoken, but all had probably been thinking the more. At last John, standing near the bow, said "I see something white; that's surely breakers."

"Weel, then," said the voice of James from the tiller, "put ower the lead."

"Man alive!" cried the leadsman, "We'll be ashore in a jiffy."

"Oh, I ken whare we are noo," said George from amidships; "that's the sea breakin' on the sands at the mou' o' the Ugie. We'll rin her ashore, and get aff when the tide gangs doon."

"No," came the decisive and determined response of James from the helm: "we'll tak' the sea for our frien' this nicht yet."

Over at once went the helm, and the boat swung her bow off shore. As she did so a huge sea rose up over the steersman's head; he "saw the great green bow o't atween him an' the sky," and in a moment it swept over the boat from stem to stern, splitting the "foresail" [mainsail] from top to bottom on the way. When it passed, the boat emerged out of the smother of waters like a dog shaking himself, and they were all there. In due course, in spite of the split sail, they made the harbour of Fraserburgh.

James was the father of Willie Hay, who was his only child. Willie was a veritable son of Anak. Long and straight of limb, broad of shoulder, and six feet four in height, he towered above ordinary people. But it was very hard to suppress a smile when he spoke—so startling was the contrast between his frame and the voice that came out of it. High-pitched and soft, it sounded like the voice of a gentle little woman. But there was no womanishness about him; he was essentially manly. He walked among other people as if he were the protector of all. Though very different in other respects, he had inherited the fearlessness of his father. When he chanced to be in command of the boat at the herring-fishing, all the *habitués* of the quay recognised the fact from afar. When other boats were coming in with one reef down, or perhaps two, his would be seen with every thread set, splashing through everything and overhauling everybody. The remark would be heard—"It's Willie Hay that's skipper there thi' day, an' he's takin' the rusty nails out o' her."

His physical endowments made him hard to beat at any exercise or sport where strength was a factor in the result. Many readers will, I know, understand what "ruggin' the sweer-tree" is; but some, I fear, won't. I will therefore explain that "ruggin'" means pulling; that the "tree" means a short stick at least four handbreadths long, capable of being grasped, and of standing a severe strain; and that "sweer" is derived from the Anglo-Saxon *swere*, which means heavy or lazy. The appropriateness of the name "ruggin' the sweer-tree" will be understood from the *modus operandi*. It is a contest between two. They sit down on level ground, face to face, and foot to foot, with the legs flat on the ground. Both reach forward and grasp the stick (which lies across the direction of their legs), each man's two hands having one of the other man's hands between them; and the question is which can pull the other up off the ground.

There was a Chapel-hill man of weight whom no one measuring with his eye could regard lightly as an opponent, and who had vanquished many. His geniality was as conspicuous as his weight, and he was, moreover, an acquaintance of Willie's. One day he said, "They say ye're a grand hand at ruggin' the sweer-tree, Willie: I never got onybody that could rug me."

Instantly the soft falsetto-like voice of Willie responded—"Ye winna hae that to say lang. Sit doon."

Willie knew his adversary's weight; but he knew

his own strength, and also the value of not letting his knees rise the least bit from the ground. It was the work of an instant to make his weighty opponent rise like a bird. Some say, in fact, that he made him fly over his head; but that may be an example of poetic license. It is certain, however, that his friend could never make the same boast again.

It was Willie's strength and his own confidence in it that caused us to lose him in the prime of his early manhood. The storms that often, towards the end of the year, raged sometimes for a week at a time on that rock-bound coast were not seldom disastrous to shipping. Timber-laden ships from the other side of the North Sea were frequent victims. When such disasters happened, the sea would for some days be strewed with planks and wreckage, which were cast in along the coast in the narrow creeks with which the cliffs were serrated, or on the beach of the bay. To appropriate any of these was theft, but to take them out of reach of the sea, and put the salvor's mark on them was good business. The salvor was allowed a third of their value for salvage. When therefore they were sold by public roup, he could outbid any one for his own heap, and have them very cheap indeed after all. And timber was very useful about a fishing village.

Looking out for these and salving them was called "Spreith-hunting." One day when scanning the sea in this way from the top of the cliffs near the village, Willie saw part of a ship's mast

in the water, and being carried by the tide towards the foot of the rocks. It struck him that he could scramble down to the point which it was likely to touch. He found it more difficult than he had supposed. He got to a point where he was in such a position that he began to fear he should not be able to get either up or down. But he reached one hand up to his neck, untied his woollen cravat, which was of some length, and using it as a rope looped round a projecting point, managed to get past the obstacle and reach the foot. His aim was to lift the topmast over a bit of rock so as to prevent the returning tide from carrying it away till he should be able to go round with his boat and tow it to a more accessible place. He never doubted his ability to execute his purpose. But he misjudged his task. It turned out to be, when out of the water, a heavy lift for three men. Yet he carried out his aim. But in doing so, as afterwards appeared, he had by violent muscular effort caused internal damage about his chest. He sickened, if not fainted, and lay back for some time against the cliff. After a little he recovered, and thought no more about it. But by and by he began to cough. He was treated for a cold. But it was really, as ultimately appeared, an abscess forming in one of his lungs. It continued to be thought an obstinate cold; and then was imagined to be developing into consumption. Kate and I took him to the home of a relative thirteen miles inland in the hope of improvement, but none came. At last it became evident that his days were numbered. I used to walk

down to the village every Sunday afternoon between services, and have a little service with him. One Sunday I went as usual. There were a good many relatives and friends there when I went in —among them, sitting with tearful eyes, the girl whom he was before long to have married. I would have preferred fewer visitors. But though there seemed still a good deal of strength in him, and no appearance of the near approach of death, I quickly made up my mind and went through with my usual ministration. I then bade him good-bye and left; going into his uncle George's next door, whose wife was blind from cataract. I had not sat three minutes when a girl ran in, asking me to go back, because Willie was dying. The abscess had burst, and its contents were suffocating him. As I began to read the commendatory prayer, the poor girl who was to have been his wife pushed her way through the other visitors, and took his hand, which she held clasped and covered with tears till the struggle was over and his spirit was gone. Then the storm of her grief broke in a terrible paroxysm. No words seemed to reach her mind; no prayer to give relief. There was nothing to be done but pray for her, and wait for the storm to spend itself. It was a sad scene; for the father's grief was equally poignant.

And it all broke out again, even worse, at the funeral. The burial-place of Willie's family was not at St. James's, but at an old churchyard nearly three miles southward. The first part of the service I said at the house. The coffin rested on a table,

and the dead face of him who had been a favourite with all lay uncovered, in the dignity and calmness of death, amid many living faces excited with grief; while the poor girl sobbed convulsively near the head. When the lesson was finished, and my voice ceased, they drew near to cover his face, and put on the lid of the coffin. The poor creature became like one demented. She clung to their hands to prevent them from hiding his face from her sight. One might have spoken to the stormy sea with as much chance of being heard. It was only by the exercise of gentle force on the part of the elder women that the final preparations were allowed to be completed. The coffin was lifted out, and rested on two chairs in front of the door, while the pall from St. James's was put over it, and the spokes with which it was to be carried were fixed underneath. Then the first relay of bearers from among his friends took their places. Two old women led out the poor girl, who staggered between them, scarcely knowing what she did. She put her hands under the head of the coffin; the bearers lifted, and the procession moved forward. Supported by the two old women, and with her hands still under the spot where the beloved head lay, she came as far as the last house in the village, whence she was led back by her friends; while we went on to lay Willie's body in its last resting-place—sad for our own sakes, sadder for hers; but with sure and certain hope of the resurrection.

The following verses appeared some time after-

wards in the *Peterhead Sentinel*, and manifestly refer to this sad scene:—

Richt strong was his arm, and richt blithsome his smile,
And, true as the licht, he could never beguile ;
When I felt his arm roun' me and looked in his e'e,
The warld a' grew bricht and delichtsome to me.

I've watched his brown sail as it danced o'er the faem
An' sprang like a livin' thing eager for hame ;
An' I kent 'twas his hand an' his love-lichtit e'e
That steered her sae straught to our hame and to me.

Oh, hapna* his face yet ! Oh leave me him there !
Oh, Willie, look up an' smile on me ance mair !
My love ! O my love ! Oh foo† dinna I dee ?
For the licht has gane oot o' this warld for me.

* Cover not. † Why.

XXI.

AULD JOHNNIE BARCLAY.

The country parish in which Johnnie and I lived, with the Kings of Denmark and Norway for our nearest neighbours on one side, was indeed fringed on its seaward border by rock scenery of great magnificence, but on the landward side was wind-swept and bare. Yet no home, even in the loveliest scenery of the world, was dearer to the hearts of its children. They and their forefathers had lived there no one knows how long. A stranger was a phenomenon. There in our day no harsh scream of railway whistle tore across the ear, but the heavens rang with the music of a thousand larks; while the sound of many waters, as the swell rose and fell on "the Skares," supplied the harmony.

Prominent among the objects of the landscape was St. James's Church. Set on a hill, it could not be hid. For ten happy years it was my lot to minister there to one of the large country congregations of the Episcopal Church. Scattered as the flock was over a district ten miles by six, the shepherd had to be always on the move. In those days the Holy Communion was not so frequently celebrated, and was more noticeably one of the dis-

tinctions of the great religious Festivals. When, amid the springing flowers and budding trees, Easter Day brought the festival of the Resurrection and renewed life, and upwards of two hundred communicants gathered in earnest devotion to seek the Bread of Life which came down from heaven, the sight was a spirit-stirring one.

But for the aged, the infirm, and the sick, the great distances made attendance in body impossible. In spirit, however, they were there, and during Easter-week it was my duty where two or three could be gathered together to minister to them the sacrament of their Saviour's love.

When memory travels back to these occasions, it brings before me, among others, a certain small, humble, thatched cottage, with a "peat-stack" at the gable; windows about eighteen inches square, and the door requiring one to stoop in entering—the whole strongly redolent of peat-smoke. There by appointment were gathered three—two of whom lived in the house—to join in the rite which was now to them, if possible, the more solemn, that they knew their sands were nearly run. One was a frail, feeble woman, who had passed the three score years and ten, and was sadly broken by ill health. The other woman, less frail, and less feeble, spoke to her companion in a tone of direction; and not without reason, being her mother. She had passed her ninety-third birthday. The third was "Auld Johnnie Barclay," as he was called, who had walked half a mile to the cottage, and who had during the previous summer hoed turnips in the

fields. Though by far the best preserved, he was by three years the eldest of the three.

He was born, as he himself was wont to express it, "in the year o' the three sevens"—to be exact, on the 24th of July, 1777. When, therefore, in December, 1877, I committed his body to the ground, he had lived among men for fully a hundred years.

It was curious to look at him in full possession of all his faculties, and think of all that had come and gone since he first opened his eyes on the world. At that time Samuel Johnson was still writing books, and Reynolds and Gainsborough painting pictures. Frederick the Great was reigning in Prussia, and Captain Cook still exploring the South Seas. The American War of Independence was still raging, with the advantage as yet to the British. Burns was a youth of eighteen, unknown to fame. Napoleon and Wellington were little boys of eight, and Wordsworth and Scott a year or two younger. Johnnie was a boy of twelve when the French Revolution shook Europe like an earthquake. He was a man of twenty when the victories of St. Vincent and Camperdown were won, to be followed next year by the victory of the Nile. He was a man of twenty-four at the Union of the Parliaments, and twenty-eight when Nelson fell in the victory of Trafalgar. He served in the local Militia during the Peninsular War, and was thirty-eight at the decisive triumph of Waterloo.

And thinking of the Church of his baptism and mine, what changes he had seen! When he was

born, and for fifteen years afterwards, the Penal Laws were in force; and it was unlawful for an Episcopalian clergyman to minister in the presence of more than five persons not of his own family, on pain of six months' imprisonment for the first offence, and banishment for life for the second. He was a boy of seven when Seabury was consecrated the first Bishop for the now great American Church by three Scottish Episcopalian Bishops in an upper room in Aberdeen. I possess an *Aberdeen Almanac* for 1803, when Johnnie was a man of twenty-six. It contains the complete clergy list of the Episcopal Church in the space of $2\frac{1}{2}$ by $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches of letter-press. And how meagre the array which it discloses! The whole south of Scotland, from the Forth and Clyde to the Border, is under one Bishop—Abernethy-Drummond of Edinburgh—who in all these fifteen populous counties has under him only six clergy—three in Edinburgh, one in Leith, one in Stirling, and one in Glasgow. In the Diocese of Moray there are three charges; in Ross (with Argyll), three; in Dunkeld, five; in Dunblane and Fife, five; in Brechin, nine; and in Aberdeen, nineteen. There are in all six Bishops and forty-seven clergy—a small number compared with the three hundred of to-day, but containing the names of George Gleig, editor of the *Encyclopædia Britannica* of his day; Alexander Jolly, "the Saint of Moray," and no less than three remarkable John Skinners. Johnnie Barclay had in his day held the plough in the fields of the patriarchal John Skinner of Lins-

hart, the author of *Tullochgorum*, and lived to see the youngest great-great-grandson of the same, the present Dean of Edinburgh, serving in the Church's ministry; serving, moreover, without any risk of being either imprisoned by the sheriff for breaking a Hanoverian Penal Law, or censured by his Bishop for not being a Jacobite.

The Scotland of Johnnie's latter days was a very different place from the Scotland of his youth; and, having all his faculties in good preservation to the end, he was well able to appreciate the contrast.

When he was a man of a hundred Cruden was a most loyal and law-abiding place: when he was a man of thirty smuggling was in the same place a regular business, carried on in defiance of King and law. Few places offered greater facilities for it, and few Cruden men were unconnected with it. Indeed, scarcely a family along the coast from the Dee to the Spey was without a more or less direct interest in it. It was considered no disgrace. It was *free trading;* and if anybody lost by it, it was but the representative of "the wee, wee German lairdie." The agents of the said representative were led a lively dance; there were no regular figures in it. And as the initiative lay with the smuggler, and he varied the figure each time, the preventive officers and their men were at a disadvantage in doing their part. They knew, indeed, that the *Crooked Mary*—the model, no doubt, of "Shirley's" *Crookit Meg*—or other equally efficient lugger was their *vis-à-vis*, but she was dreadfully uncertain in her movements. An Irish jig

was nothing to it. They would perhaps occasionally see her on the horizon in daylight, and knew that she was from Flushing with a cargo of handy little kegs of gin. So did the fishermen. But of course they gave no sign of recognition. They were fishermen. They attended to their own business. They watched the tide, and went off to their fishing at the proper time of the tide. No doubt it was often in the middle of the night, when it was hard for the preventive-man to see all their movements. It was not their fault that the *Crooked Mary* would persist in crossing their fishing-ground, and passing them very close—yes, sometimes very close indeed. They shot their lines, and waited as usual, and hauled their lines, and made for home with their take. If it was not daylight when they arrived, how could they help it? They could make neither sun nor moon stand still, nor hasten their progress. If they passed close underneath an overhanging cliff, where the gauger could not see whether or not they bestowed any kegs of gin in any of its caves or crevices or cracks, whereof there were plenty capable of holding whole boat-loads, why should the suspicious man suppose that was the very thing they were doing? If by some chance a gauger were so foolish as to find a keg or two being carried up in a fish-wife's creel from the shore to the houses at the "heugh-head" —well, so much the worse for the gauger. A tap on the head from the spoke of a carriage-wheel (previously concealed in the sleeve of the fisherman's jacket) would prevail on him to shut his

eyes till all such unwholesome sights were rendered impossible. It would be much better for his health to watch the distribution of the kegs inland, for if he could catch them thus in transit he would, in a good many cases at least, have but women to deal with. Only they were, certainly, not women to be trifled with. A string of fisher girls, carrying contraband gin, had been known to bind the gauger hand and foot, and leave him to solitary meditation in a lonely spot till they had completed their errand, thereafter sending a small boy to stumble across him accidentally and earn sixpence by loosing him, and setting him free. In that case the gauger was *sure* he had lost a haul of gin. He was also quite sure in another case. He was walking along the old road which passes westward by Cruden Parish Church and the farm of Ardiffery in the dusk of the evening, when he stumbled across two men, each with a keg of gin on his shoulder. He promptly proclaimed the confiscation of the goods "in the King's name and authority." One of the men put down his keg and ran. The other, a dull, half-witted looking fellow, stood as if paralysed. The gauger ordered him to pick up the other keg and carry both to his house. The man slowly and stupidly obeyed. After a bit he found his voice sufficiently to complain that he was tired, and must have a rest, or he could not carry them any further. When the gauger agreed they leant their backs against the sloping side of the "faill" dyke at the south side of the road. As they rested the darkness continued to deepen. The

gauger thought it was time to move on. "If you had carried that gin as far as I have," said the man, "you would not be in such a hurry." After a little longer delay the gauger insisted on moving, when he perceived to his dismay and astonishment that the kegs had disappeared. He sprang over the dyke, thinking his stupid-looking friend had slipped them over. So he had, a considerable time before, his confederate having quietly slipped down the other side of the dyke to receive them, and thereafter promptly disappeared with them into the darkness across the fields. When the gauger, failing to find them, returned to the road it was to discover that his stupid friend had disappeared too. That night the gauger's wife thought her husband came home in a most unaccountably bad temper. No doubt it was worse than that of Johnnie Barclay's acquaintances, the two smugglers, who were very likely chuckling together over the success of their stratagem.

On another occasion the gauger felt sure he had lost the gin, though he had only circumstantial evidence for his conviction. He knew the *Crooked Mary* had been recently in sight of the coast, and was in consequence somewhat excited and suspicious. Crossing a field from a farm-house, he espied a fish-wife with her creel evidently loaded, trudging northward along the coast road. Could the load be gin, instead of fish? Evidently from the way she was leaning forward her load was a pretty heavy one. It must be kegs of gin. He at once altered his direction to intercept her. The fish-

wife evidently objected, for she quickened her pace, and seeing him do the same at last proceeded to run. So did the gauger. But, load and all, the woman succeeded in gaining a cottage by the road-side a couple of hundred yards in advance of her pursuer. "For any sake," she gasped to the woman in the cottage, "tak' this out o' my creel and hide it, for the gauger's at my heels." In an instant the kegs were in the cradle, and comfortably rolled up in the cradle-blanket, with the woman's apron thrown over the head of the cradle to keep the sunshine out of the bairn's eyes. The poor man found nothing in the creel but two pair of smoked haddocks. He felt perfectly convinced that these never made the bearer of the creel move as she had done. He searched everywhere, while the woman rocked the cradle and sang to prevent the sleeping infant from being disturbed by the proceedings of the gauger. (The real infant was away in a sister's arms at a neighbour's.) He never suspected the cradle, and finally departed as light as he came. To the end of his days he wondered what had been done with that gin.

Such episodes were of frequent occurrence in Johnnie Barclay's younger days. They were very amusing to all but the gauger. Johnnie delighted to relate them till he was a hundred years old. Generally when he had any hand in such things, it was as servant to some one else engaged in the business. But once, in partnership with John Stuart, a fellow-servant,—both, more by token, being in the service of the Lord High Constable of Scotland,—he had a smuggle of his own.

The two friends contrived and made a new and original store for their gin. To the north of the Castle a steep grassy slope,—so steep and smooth that one could not walk on it without slipping,—ran down to the edge of a cliff with a perpendicular face dropping sheer down to the sea ninety feet below. Down this slope they lowered one another in turn by a rope, and scooped the earth from under the grassy turf where it ended at the edge of the cliff, throwing the *débris* over into the sea. There was soon room for a whole row of kegs under the turf, where they could be seen and reached only by the sea-gulls. And here in due course the kegs were stored till they could conveniently be disposed of inland. The pair knew of a market for them at Longside, nine miles away. But the question was how to get them there. There were good horses in his Lordship's stable which had too little to do, and very much needed exercise. It was their duty to his Lordship to exercise these same horses; and with properly arranged feeding they might have it by night as beneficially as by day. They did not need to mention to his Lordship every time they took the horses out for exercise. Still less did they need to mention where they were going, and what form the exercise was to take. They fixed cushions of straw behind the saddle to save the horses' backs from chafing, and slung the kegs, two on each side like John Gilpin "to keep the balance true." So one dark night when all was quiet they set out, Stuart about fifty yards ahead of Johnnie.

All went well till they came to the haunted hollow beyond Cairn Catto. Johnnie was not thinking of any such thing as "ghaists." Every stone of the road was familiar to him, and he would no more have thought of ghostly passengers on that familiar spot than in the stable at the Castle. But all at once the noble steed that he rode shook and trembled, and finally sank down snorting with terror on the road. Johnnie had not lost his seat, and scarcely had time to wonder what was the matter, when a large black horse and rider glided silently past, looming large between him and the sky. "As sure's death, sir, I never heard that horse's feet afore he cam' up nor after he gaed past, though the road was as hard as a causeway." The moment it had passed his horse sprang snorting to his feet and went forward at a gallop, quickly overtaking Stuart who was jogging quietly along. "What was that ye met?" shouted Johnnie. "Naething," answered Stuart unconcernedly. "Ye've been sleepin' in the saddle as usual, ye heavy headit idiot. Ye're a fine hand for a fore-guard." "I was *not* sleepin'," answered Stuart hotly, "and, what's mair, I met naething." "Weel, that beats a'. Just feel my horse. *He* doesna think it was naething. He's in a pour o' sweat wi' terror. It gart *my* flesh creep forbye the horse." When Johnnie described his experience, Stuart became paralysed with fear, and his horse was the only unmoved member of the party. Johnnie was most anxious to get home before anyone would be stirring at

the Castle, but could not induce Stuart to budge, till the faint light of dawn began to tremble in the East. Even he himself thought it would be safer not to go on such errands again between a Saturday and Sunday, at any rate through the "howe" behind Cairn Catto.

"It was a bad trade," Johnnie said. One would have thought the principals should have made money by it, but somehow they did not thrive.

And sometimes there were sad disasters. Johnnie was a man of twenty-one when Philip Kennedy, a noted smuggler, was killed in an encounter with the preventive men near the Kirk of Slains. A cargo had been safely landed and concealed, and arrangements made for conveying it by cart inland in the dead of night. Philip Kennedy and two others walked a good way in front as "fore-guard." All was thought to be safe as on former occasions. But somehow all had become known to the preventive officers, and the "fore-guard" found themselves confronted by three armed gaugers. Kennedy, powerful and athletic, and daring as well, instantly seized two of them, and throwing them down held them helpless on the road. There was but one man left for his two friends to deal with. But they were of different mettle from Kennedy, and incontinently fled. The preventive-man, being thus left free, proceeded to hack at Kennedy's head with his cutlass. Kennedy, not knowing what his friends had done, held on to his men, till the officer, being enabled by a glint of moonlight to see what he

was doing, aimed a blow which cleft Kennedy's skull. The poor fellow subsequently managed to stagger to a farm-house close by, where he died. "It was a bad trade," said Johnnie: "it's weel awa'."

Johnnie served in the militia during the Napoleonic wars. The Cruden men in the force were chaffed as being heavy and slow. It was said that Johnnie put an end to this by putting his heels together and jumping into and out of a large empty cask at a shop door, and inviting the clever ones to follow. I once asked him whether it was true. "Oh! true eneugh that I jumpit in; but I saw some ugly rusty nails on the inside, and I didna risk them by jumping out again."

It was no small thing that succeeded in disturbing Johnnie's equanimity. At one time he was the occupier of a small croft whose buildings were, as is sometimes the case, nearly done, and in a very dilapidated condition; a state of things to which Johnnie's easy-going disposition was probably a contributory cause. One summer night—in these northern parts there is at that season but a short period of darkness at midnight—a neighbour had got up about three o'clock to see what the weather was like, and looking out at the window was horrified to see Johnnie's house apparently a ruin, the roof having fallen in. Full of fear lest Johnnie should be lying dead, or severely wounded, among the ruins, he rushed down across the fields, and cried, "Are ye there, Johnnie?" "Aye. What the mischief do ye want here

at this time o' night?" "I saw that your roof was in and was fear't that ye might be killed." "Killed! Na, na, man. There's nane o't in the fire. I'll dae weel eneugh here till mornin'. Gae awa' hame to your bed. But ye can come doon and help me out to feed my horse at the usual time." He was quite safe and satisfied in his "bound-in" bed. Evidently the tear and wear of anxiety and excitement would never shorten Johnnie's life. Certainly he held out a long way beyond the usual span. One day I went in to see him as usual.

"Weel, Johnnie, how are you to-day?"

"Oh, fine, sir, fine, thank ye. I never was better."

"I suppose you're as much to the fore as ever, are you?"

"Na, hardly that. But I'm aye pleased."

"That's just it, Johnnie, I do believe. If you had been like some folk, you would have 'girned' yoursel' to death thirty years ago."

Still the decay of time told on him, and though he was quite well in health, and could walk about in possession of all his faculties, his strength gradually waned. As I sat by him one day after he had reached the age of ninety-seven, he said he did not think he *could* be much longer in this world. So in view of his departure he had arranged who were to get his Bible, his Prayer Book, and an ancient-looking gun with a very long barrel hanging over the fire-place,—which were

the only possessions remaining to him since he became a pensioner of the Parochial Board.

He then took down his big Bible, and out of it,—safe hiding-place,—took a five pound note. This he entrusted to me, saying that he had kept it for his burial, and if there was anything over it was to go to the Endowment Fund of St. James's.

Not, however, for three years more did the call come. There was no illness, no visible change. Only one morning the Unseen Hand beckoned his spirit hence, and it departed. He had exemplified the Archangel's words in *Paradise Lost*:—

> ———"If thou well observe
> The rule of NOT TOO MUCH, by temperance taught,
> In what thou eat'st and drink'st, seeking from thence
> Due nourishment, not gluttonous delight,
> Till many years over thy head return,
> So may'st thou live, till like ripe fruit thou drop
> Into thy mother's lap, or be with ease
> Gathered, not harshly plucked, for death mature."

XXII.

"THE K-NICHT."

"THE K-NICHT" was the popular title of Major-General Sir Alexander Leith, K.C.B., of Freefield and Glenkindie, Aberdeenshire, who died in 1859 at the age of 85. No other name was given to him in popular parlance "where Gadie rins at the back o' Bennachie," or anywhere else in the Earldom of the Garioch.

The fact that "*O! an' I were where Gadie rins*" is one of the marching tunes of the Gordon Highlanders, tells of the connexion between the district and the regiment famous in British history in the days of "The Peninsula," as well as in the more recent days of Dargai and the South African war. That connexion also tells of the military capacities of the people, who, douce and practical and cautious as they look on a cursory inspection, have shown themselves capable of exhibiting, when occasion demands, the tenacious staying power of the Teuton combined with the hurricane dash of the Kelt. They not only hold on, but go on.

As the train carries you into their country you see green fields conquered from the waste stretching up and up the hill-sides towards the top. They have been advancing further and further up

for many a day. In this manner these men have been scaling Dargai for generations. You wonder whether the crops can repay them for the tear and wear of life and limb. I daresay the same question sometimes occurs to them. But then it is not in them to turn back. It is not to be wondered at that men of this type should have been proud of "The K-nicht" when he came home from the Peninsula with his well-won promotion and knighthood. His military servants came with him, also proud of him, and full of tales of his daring and skill, and of his love for the hand-to-hand struggle which earned him the *sobriquet* of "Cauld Steel" throughout the Peninsular army, and made him equally conspicuous in the minds of friends and foes.

As with the men of the district, so with him, there was no getting away from heredity. He came of a race whose blood ran hot, whose hands were strenuous and swift, and who never feared the face of mortal man. It was a race of great antiquity. "According to Douglas," says Dr Temple, "the Leiths had considerable possessions in lands in the county of Midlothian in early times. The barony of Restalrig and several others in the territory of Leith are said to have belonged to them. From the last place it is believed they assumed the surname."

The period at which they settled in the north cannot be precisely stated. But William Leith of Barnes, from whom is traced the descent of the northern Leiths, was an accomplished man, a

burgess of Aberdeen, which he represented in Parliament, and for some time Deputy-Chamberlain and Steward of the Household of Queen Joanna, wife of Bruce's son, David II., in the earlier half of the fourteenth century. He had, manifestly, the strong characteristics of the race, which had small belief in the proverb—"*Never draw your dirk when a dunt will do't,*" and at anyrate hesitated little about the dunt. He slew Cattanach, a bailiff of the town, and for atonement gave two valuable bells to the Church of St. Nicholas, and the Justice Mills to the town. The hot blood and swift hand are often in evidence in the history of his descendants. One of them inhabited the old castle of Harthill, whose ruins still stand near the foot of Bennachie. It is related that he had by his depredations made himself such a scourge to his neighbours that they combined to exterminate him. As they advanced to the attack in the grey light of the morning, Leith was seen at a window shaving. One of his enemies recognising him shouted, "You need not put yourself to the trouble of taking off your beard: we're going to take the whole head off shortly."

"When ye get my head," promptly responded Leith, "ye can do wi't as ye like; in the meantime it's mine, and I'll do wi't as *I* like"; wherewith he completed his shaving, and beat his enemies off in utter rout.

On the 24th of December, 1639, John Leith of Harthill, who was an ardent Royalist, made a violent irruption into the Provost's pew in the Old

Kirk of Aberdeen, in the middle of the service. He was arrested, and at the examination before the magistrates immediately after the service, he called the Provost "but a doittit cock and ane ass; and while the clerk was reading the complaint and accusation against him, not only did Harthill violently pluck the paper furth of his hand and tear the same to pieces, but likewise took the clerk, Mr George Robertson, his penner and ink-horne, which was lying before him on the table, and cast the same eagerlie at his face, and thairwith hurt and wounded him in two several parts to the great effusion of his blood." He was put in jail, but got arms from outside, and attacked his jailors. When put in irons his manacles soon disappeared, and he explained that he had sent them up to Harthill. He made himself master of the jail, set his fellow-prisoners free, and held the fort against all comers. He was, however, mastered by the Estates, and taken to Edinburgh, where he was imprisoned till Montrose made himself master of the city.

His son Patrick, with young Gight and other accomplices, in order to help out the furnishing of a troop to serve under Montrose, surprised in 1645 ten men of Craigievar's troop lying carelessly in their beds in their quarters at Inverurie; took their horses, their moneys, their apparel and arms, and gave the men liberty to go. Little more than a year afterwards he was beheaded in Edinburgh as a rebel, being not more than twenty-five years old.

Evidently, whatever else may be said, the race of which "The K-nicht" came was not a race of weaklings. He himself was certainly no weakling. Tales of his deeds of personal prowess in the Peninsular War, brought home by his military servants, were frequently recounted "between the lights" at the firesides in the homes of the Garioch. No doubt they had an effect on the imagination of the boys at the back of Bennachie; and who knows but "The K-nicht" may in this way have helped to storm Dargai?

He was a man of remarkable physical strength. Moreover, this strength was made infinitely more dangerous by the lightning swiftness with which it was brought to bear. Naturally a man with such an endowment would dislike the musket, which was calculated to put the weak on a level with the strong. Further, he was once severely wounded in the head, and knocked senseless by a musket ball. His feeling towards shooting weapons often came out during the rest of his life. When with a mixed shooting party, he had a sharp eye for any one who appeared to carry his gun carelessly. "Keep up the muzzle of your gun! Keep up the muzzle of your gun! Don't you see you may shoot yourself or some one else of more consequence?"

It was equally natural that a man of his strength and fearlessness should always be eager for close quarters. But he was not content with only his sword. He carried with him into battle a stout bludgeon of tough oak, with a hole bored through

the smaller end to carry a loop of hair rope, through which his left wrist was passed in order that the weapon should not be lost by being knocked out of his grasp. In my student days there were two at Freefield, one somewhat longer than the other, and both bearing marks of hard service. The bludgeon was carried in the left hand while the sword lasted, and used for both defence and offence. But when through his furious manner of fighting his sword got broken, the bludgeon was transferred to the right hand, and became his only weapon.

In James Grant's *Romance of War* the bludgeon is prominent in the portrait of the redoubtable Major Campbell of the Gordon Highlanders. Whether "The K-nicht" was the model from which the Major's portrait was drawn I do not know. If he was, Grant has made use of the poetical license. He makes the Major considerably older than "The K-nicht was at the time. Again, the Major brings into his talk Egypt and Sir Ralph Abercromby as often as another Major—Dugald Dalgetty of Mareschal College and Drumthwackit—drags in the immortal Gustavus Adolphus, the Lion of the North and the Bulwark of the Protestant Faith. I believe "The K-nicht" *was* in Egypt with Sir Ralph, where his servant, Benson, was the strongest man in the British force. But, at anyrate in after years, he was not in the habit of referring to it. There is, however, no doubt about the cudgel. Here is Grant's picture:—"Major Campbell was a handsome Highlander of a most

muscular make and herculean form. His dark hair was becoming grizzled, for he was nearly fifty years of age, and his nut-brown cheek had been tanned by the sun and storm of many a varied clime. From the strength of his arm and the length of his sword (a real Andrea Ferrara, with the maker's name on the blade), he was a most uncomfortable antagonist at close quarters, as many of the French and others had found to their cost; but Campbell never drew his Andrea unless he found himself pressed, but made use of a short oak stick, furnished with a heavy knob at the end, which he had cut in one of the wild forests of Argyllshire, and always retained and carried with him as a relic and memorial of his native mountains." Grant makes the Major lose his stick at the Pass of Maya. "Here it may be worth mentioning that Major Campbell lost his celebrated cudgel, which, in the enthusiasm of the moment, he sent flying among the foe, and unhorsed a mounted officer." "The K-nicht's" bludgeon came home in as good order as himself. Also as regards the sword there was at one time at Freefield a bagful of sword-hilts with more or less of the blades remaining to them.

The habit of getting to close quarters caused him on various occasions to be taken prisoner, but he always escaped. One of the tales of escape told by his servant was that the French officers had him in their tent with a sentry at the door while they discussed what was to be done with him—for he was by this time as well known in the French

army as in our own. The drift of the discussion seemed to point to his being interned in a French fortress till the end of the war—a prospect by no means to his liking. He thought it was time to try whether he could not avoid it. The sentry, with loaded musket and bayonet fixed, was at the tent door. His sword, of which he had been deprived, lay on a camp-stool. While his captors were deep in their discussion he sprang to his weapon, with a slash slit open the back of the tent, and like a flash was through the rent, running like a deer, and zig-zagging among the tents, so that before the sentry caught sight of him he was beyond the range of the musket, and ultimately got clear away.

There was an exciting tale of another escape, or rather rescue. He had been struck by a musket ball in the head, and disabled, and thus been easily captured. But a party of his men, led by the herculean Benson, before long took him out of the enemy's hands, taking care to bring his sword also, which a French officer parted with along with his life as the result of a stroke from Benson.

Sergeant Williams used to tell of the capture of a battery which had been causing great trouble. In the darkness and noise of a very bad night "The K-nicht" led his men up as close as was possible without detection, and made them lie down in perfect silence. As soon as there was enough light to distinguish friend from foe he gave the signal; and before the awakened Frenchmen could use their guns they were being rushed by an

irresistible enemy. On the brink of the trench Williams saw a Frenchman point his musket at "The K-nicht's" head, not a yard from his face. "By goy," Williams said, "I thought 'The K-nicht' was shot; but the powder had got damp in the night, and missed fire. With one stroke 'The K-nicht' split his head to the teeth, and we were both through the ditch and the Frenchmen mastered before they knew where they were."

Another tale displayed his vigour of tongue as well as of arm. If the enemy swore terribly in Flanders, it swore no less terribly in the Peninsula, and many soldiers never got over the habit, though some of them, in deference to public opinion about Freefield, endeavoured, like Sergeant Williams, to soften some of the expressions. One night Leith was kept from sleep by the suspicion that the French might try to get over the river on which they lay, and attempt a night surprise. He got up and went to see, when he discovered that they had somehow got a boat or two, and were quietly putting men across. He promptly disputed the passage with all the force he could command; but the enemy made a vigorous attempt to carry out their plan, and the contest raged till morning. When Wellington rode down, he encountered Leith in his shirt sleeves, the said sleeves rolled up above the elbows, his face and arms black with gunpowder smoke, and his eyes blazing with the rage of battle. "You've had some hot work this morning, Leith," said his chief. "—— —— it, you should have come sooner to see, and to give

us some help." For the sake of discipline he was cashiered; but a fortnight later was reinstated.

These are examples of the tales of his soldier servants. At home in after years every one knew that he had to be handled as carefully as a loaded torpedo. "Auld Warthill" was the only neighbour who ventured to chaff him. That pawkie old laird used to make sly allusions to a duel which "The K-nicht" was said to have fought without bullets in the pistols. It was believed that the seconds, who thought it would be a pity if two such fine soldiers should hurt each other, agreed to put no bullets in the weapons, and so prevent any such result. "—— it," was "The K-nicht's" response, "d'ye think I don't know the crack of a pistol that has no bullet?"

His political opinions were such that he could not endure such a man as O'Connell. On one occasion he went down to the home farm to take part in the celebration of the King's birthday. The servants there had bethought them of constructing a very gaudy piece of bunting, without intending it to symbolise anything in particular. It consisted of a sheet, over which were pinned or stitched a large number of printed pocket-handkerchiefs. The general effect was rich. It caught the eye of "The K-nicht," and when the gentle breeze spread it out he perceived that in the very centre was a handkerchief with portrait of O'Connell. With a curse he shouted, "Where's Beaton?" Beaton, the gamekeeper, emerged gingerly from the crowd, and saluted. "Go and

put a ball through the head of that —— ——." This being done altered the symbolism to "The K-nicht's" taste, and the celebration went merrily on.

Of his personality and history it may confidently be affirmed that they did much towards moulding the vigorous character of men who have fought for their country as he did, and have helped to make the name of one of the most famous regiments in the British army.

And if that was the effect on his neighbours it cannot be wondered at if his sons, in whose veins ran the blood of the Leiths, should have proved worthy of their father. Three of them became soldiers, and helped to make the empire on the stricken fields of India. All three did credit to their name, and two of them were distinguished above their fellows. The eldest of the three (who was six feet and a half high, and was afterwards General Disney Leith, C.B.) was in his younger days "The Hero of Multan," on the wall of which he was the first British soldier to plant his foot, and did so at the cost of his left hand. When he came home, a lady spread her shawl in front of the carriage door for his feet. He lightly sprang across it, and with the help of the artificial substitute for the lost hand, picked it up and placed it on her shoulders. His father, the old "K-nicht," soundly rated him for despising his advice, and not taking his old Peninsular bludgeon to the wars. "If you had had it, you might have brought home your hand."

Another of the three, Major James Leith, did some strenuous fighting in the critical days of the Mutiny, and won the distinction most coveted in the British army, the badge "For valour," the Victoria Cross. The Leiths have been a race of warriors from their rise until now.